

Modernity in Architecture in Relation to Context

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Modernity in Architecture in Relation to Context

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For young karls, wherever they may be.

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SUMMARY

The thesis questions the ways in which architecture might embody the notion of modernity in different cultures and regions yet achieve appropriateness relative to place. In the early twentieth century in the industrialized world, the issue of modernity in architecture was identified with the notions of abstraction and rationalization that colored the development of the modern movement. The second generation of the modern movement queried the roles of human experiences and urban and architectural contexts in architectural design. With the spread of the modern movement to the rest of the world, the issue of context in architecture grew stronger. Following this line of thought, this dissertation examines the tension between modernist abstractionism and urban and architectural contexts in place in which the presence and the role of local knowledge and traditions in architecture remained influential. It investigates modernity in architecture through a specific Asian reading and through an analysis of the work of Geoffrey Bawa of Sri Lanka. Selected works of Geoffrey Bawa are chosen because the significance of his oeuvre is often contested by interpreters who see it as reflecting various contemporary approaches, including regionalism and vernacularism. Thus, in an effort to refute such simplistic explanations of his work, this thesis examines selected works of Bawa, analyzing their spatial organization, formal arrangement, materials, techniques, and building details. In particular, it attempts to highlight the ways in which Bawa articulated the notions of experience and memory in his architecture. These analyses are then placed within the framework of the social and cultural situations that his architecture confronted in Sri Lanka. It is within this framework that we might determine the ways in which modernity and locality were embodied in Bawa's work. Interpretations of his work take into account the understanding of modernity as a cultural practice and an attitude. Modernity as an attitude relates to a specific modernist subject who is able to use reason for judgment in addressing context. In this dissertation, a reading on the work of Walter Benjamin on modernity, the pasts, and traditions frames this understanding of this modernist subjectivity. In architecture, modernity as an attitude means that is not a style but a way of thinking and formulating design intent. This inquiry is then used as a framework within which this dissertation will interpret the relationship between modernity and local identity. The conclusions of the dissertation contribute to an understanding of the achievement of modernity in architecture in tight relationship to context. On a more focused level, it also hopes to contribute to an appreciation of the extant works of Geoffrey Bawa, which the author of this dissertation deems exemplary of what modern architecture might achieve in Asia.

Chapter 1

Introduction

In nearly every part of the world, modernity, a global phenomenon, has become an accepted situation. Modernity has created a milieu in which contemporary architectural styles have been imposed in various situations in different locales. Many argue that the ideas of modernist abstractionism have been firmly established in international architecture. However, in light of this phenomenon, many question whether appropriate architecture should not be for a particular setting. During the development of twentieth century architecture, Scandinavian architects, in particular Alvar Aalto, critically reacted to the notion of abstractionism. Following their examples, contemporary architects in other parts of the world also began to wrestle with the issue, prompting one of the debates among contemporary architectural critics, that is, the way in which architecture negotiates between a sense of local identity and modernity, which can be understood in a limited sense as an encounter between contemporary international and local traditions in architecture. Following this line of thought, this dissertation explores the different ways in which architects in such locations have dealt with the issues of modernism, abstractionism, and identity.

1.1 Modern Architecture and Local Contexts

An overview of modernism in architecture reveals, among many other things, the fascination of architects of the Modern Movement in the early twentieth century with a particular abstraction, that is, the notion of elementarism. Reyner Banham asserted that elementarism, in the academic tradition, along with an interest in machine age technology, characterized the development of the modern movement.¹ This

combination of academism and the impact of the machine was associated with the drive toward rationalization, progress in the industrial world, and the role of machines in everyday life. Anthony Vidler asserted that the notions of standardization and regulation offered by the proliferation of industrial machines allowed architects such as Hermann Muthesius and Le Corbusier to connect the new architecture of that time with classical tradition through the idea of the object-type.² In conjunction with a fascination with the machine world, advances in the technology of construction also affected the development of the modern movement, as evidenced in the role of the frame structures. Thus, William Jordy has asserted that the machine provided a symbolic objectivity as the essence of architecture in the 1920s, referring to the tendency towards elemental shapes, the use of contemporary technology—including frames structures, glass, and steel—and a vision invoking the characteristics of “informal, energetic, clarity, order, and optimism.”³ Manfredo Tafuri elaborated upon this notion with the idea that the first generation of architects of the modern movement embraced a project of enlightenment by aligning the avant-garde movement with the modernized, mechanized world in order to realize utopia.⁴

These architects embraced the notion of functionalism derived from the industrial process and from machine aesthetics, stressing the cell-like elements that could be assembled and reassembled indefinitely together with concepts from Cubism, considering a work of art as an arrangement of free-floating elements on a regulated plane. In this way, the architecture of the modern movement emphasized the notion of “universality,” in effect, a condition of anonymity resulting from the blurring of the boundaries between “high” and “low” art, and relating it to the spirit of the machine world. Tafuri asserted that the crisis of the object, the severed connection between an object and its supposed organic relationship to a society, history, and meaning, was resolved

through the emphasis on architecture that celebrated the value of mass reproducibility. Thus, the first generation of the modern movement emphasized machines and abstract forms with the idea that this would lead to a universal architecture. Modernist abstractionism was not only the focus of design techniques but also linked to construction techniques based on the industrial process. The term “International Style” captured the mood of this universal architecture. Considerations of factors outside the formal, spatial, programmatic, structural aspects were very limited. With this limitation, only the physical aspects of nature, such as climate and views, affected designs.⁵ Tafuri’s discussion of Le Corbusier’s plans for Algiers identified the approach in which abstract, cell-like elements were arranged to form an underlying structure into which the topography of the land and ancient *casbahs* were incorporated as parts of the elements of the design.⁶

The architecture of the modern movement had already developed a growing interest in other concerns by the 1930s, however Jordy has pointed out that, beginning in the 1930s, those involved in the movement began to show an awareness of nature, history, monumentality, and ornament. In short, it was an awareness of the human experience.⁷ The work of the second generation of the modern movement, including Alvar Aalto, Berthold Lubetkin, Kunio Maekawa, Oscar Niemeyer, and Giuseppe Terragni, exemplified this direction.⁸ The architecture of one of the foremost figures of the second generation of the modern movement, Alvar Aalto, reflects the Finns’ pre-occupation with the geometry of the Scandinavian forest and the vernacular of the Finns’ peasant houses, while also alluding to Mediterranean antiquity.⁹ Indeed, in the most elaborate study on Aalto, Demetri Porphyrios has argued that Aalto reacted against the first generation’s abstract, anonymous, machine aesthetic and their rejection of the past through design strategies that relied on the use of typology and metaphor.¹⁰ Porphyrios

asserts that Aalto aimed at regenerating the notion of individuality, community, tradition, and culture without reverting to an imitation of past architecture.

In one of the early attempts to this awareness of the notion of context, Lewis Mumford brought up this topic in his lectures in 1941, in which he pointed to the regional and universal aspects of architecture.¹¹ He argued that classical and modern architecture were related in the continuity of the notion of reductionism, standardization, and mechanical reproduction. Furthermore, he asserted the relationship to the colonial project, in which one would feel at home everywhere in the world in buildings based on classical precepts. By the same token, this argument implied a similar effect of the universality of modernist architecture. However, he also argued that the regional, hence contextual, and universal aspects could potentially inform each other, underlining the importance of the sensibilities to location and of the process of adaptation. He illustrated architecture of Thomas Jefferson as an example of architecture that was based on the universal principles of classical architecture, but adapted to local needs and building programs.¹² As a foil to that of Jefferson, Mumford presented the work of Henry Hobson Richardson as an example of the translation of new functions into local idioms through explorations of local building traditions, such as traditional cottages and farmhouses, and local materials, such as stones, bricks, and woods.¹³ Mumford emphasized the emotional aspect in Richardson's architecture.

In addition to the case of Aalto, Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co has pointed to those who advocated the humanization of architecture through a consideration of experiences, building materials, environment, and traditions reflected in the New-Empiricism of the Scandinavian countries, the New Towns movement in England, the Neo-Realism in Italy, and the Bay Area Regionalism in California, among others.¹⁴ One

concern about these movements was an awareness of the collective past of a society in contrast to the emphasis on abstraction and functionalism of modernism in the 1920s and the early 1930s. In the case of the Bay Region Style, for example, Mumford praised its approach as an example of a “humane form of modernism ... a free yet unobtrusive expression of the terrain, the climate, and the way of life on the Coast.¹⁵” Mumford stressed that modern architecture was still in a developing process and that the Bay Region style was “an example of a form of modern architecture which came into existence with our growth and which is so native that people, when they ask for a building, do not ask for it in any style.¹⁶”

The second generation reclaimed the urban and architectural context, which underscored the shift from the universal and the anonymous to the particular. They also brought back different approaches to abstraction, using concepts such as typology and metaphor. The discussion on the work of Aalto and the writings of Mumford, in effect, points to the issue of a meaningful relationship to place and people. In other words, it is the issue of authenticity. Tied to this relational issue is the issue of the state or attribute of that place and people, that is, identity. Following this approach, Alan Colquhoun pointed to the notion of historicism that was based on the idea that cultural values were not universal, but local, particular, inherited practice, autochthonous and populist.¹⁷ He continued by claiming that historicism had originated in the anti-Enlightenment position that was manifested in the Romantic Movement, which replaced figural representations of external forms with efforts to reveal their essence. At the same time, historicism strove to reach specific historic relationships, a view that was manifested in the doctrine of authenticity. In terms of Romantic thought, Colquhoun alluded to some of the main pre-occupations of Weber and the German Romanticists.¹⁸ Weber was concerned with the “disenchantment” caused by rationalization and secularization and the “iron cage” of

capitalism. As a reaction to this stress on rationalization, the German romanticists made a distinction between *Zivilization* and *Kultur*. The former referred to the universal, technical, rational, and materialistic world associated with the modern world, while the latter related to the less cerebral, autochthonous, and the particular. Colquhoun continued by discussing the distinction that Ferdinand Tönnies had made between *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft*. The former was a rational form of relationship with a particular end, such as business enterprises whose goal is profits. The latter was an organic form of relationship, in which the social relationship itself is the end or the goal, such as within a family or a religion. Following this line of thought, the doctrine of authenticity pertains to the desire for an authentic experience, one that would stem from an organic unity of a geographic location, a group of people, and their culture, including artifacts such as architecture. This unity would form a fixed identity, a distinctiveness of that group of people generated by the ethnographic and geographic bond. The doctrine of authenticity is the creation of the experience of this identity. This belief in such a unity evinces the notion of an ideal society in the tradition of *Kultur* and *Gemeinschaft*, with its own unique architectural expressions.

It can be argued that the first and second generations of modernism mostly come from industrialized countries, in which industrialization has been deeply enmeshed in society. Hence, issues related to modernist abstractionism versus context are situated within the industrial societies. However, these issues become more evident following the Second World War, when the architecture of the modern movement spread to the developing world that had just emerged from colonialism. Despite concerns raised by the second generation of modernist architects, the use of modernist abstractionism based on simple geometry, along with the use of concrete, glass, and steel, became symbols of modernity associated with the notion of progress embodied in the process of

industrialization. Projects such as the creation of Chandigarh exemplify this tendency. Siegfried Giedion, in 1954, wrote about what he called The New Regional Approach which had the most potential for the developing world.¹⁹ This New Regionalism was, in effect, an extension of the spirit of rationalization which would incorporate local natural factors. Another case is that of Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew, who promoted modernism with a consideration for the climates of Asia and Africa.²⁰ However, their approaches were basically the application of modernist abstractionism and the use of elementary geometric forms and concrete structures featured prominently in their book and their work. Their approach precisely exemplified Le Corbusier's assertion of a universal technology and universal principles that were reconciled with particular natural features. Shanti Jayewardene has argued that the tropical variant of the international style was, in part, a result of the mix between a crystallization architectural method based on standardization and rationalization and the interests of the building industry.²¹ Following this line of argument, Kenza Boussora asserted that the evidence of modern architecture in Algeria has demonstrated that such architecture featured spatial norms that differed from those of local architecture and that buildings based on modernist principles often neglected local resources, requiring the importation of labor, technology, and materials.²²

It can also be argued that, for the third generation of modernists in this part of the world, where building practice, for example, has not gone through the process of industrialization, the traditions related to architecture and urbanism are still very much alive. Traditions, including those in the realm of a building, still play a significant role in the everyday life without being affected by any notion of the new rationality. In addition, the economic structure that sustains the building industry strongly relies on labor-intensive and low-technology factors, without steel and glass which would be cost

prohibitive. This dissertation raises the question of how architects from the non-industrial world have variously reacted to notions of modernism and abstractionism.

Issues such as those raised by Boussora and Jayewardene above reflect this situation. This question essentially engages the issue of modernist abstractionism versus context. The thesis questions the ways in which architecture might incorporate the notion of modernity in different locations and yet achieve appropriateness relative to a specific location. At one level, it deals with the issue of design approaches in places with rich architectural traditions. On another level, it deals with the aspect of meanings in relationship to the issue of authenticity and identity. Beside meanings associated with the issue of place, and hence authenticity, this raises the issue of being modern in this particular location. Following this line of thought, this dissertation approaches this question in the Asian context, as most Asian nations have experienced issues of modernity associated with a rapid evolution that took place after the Second World War. In architectural terms, most of these nations face the disparity between modern and traditional techniques. For this purpose, this dissertation has taken its focus an analysis of the work of Geoffrey Bawa of Sri Lanka, because of his stature among Asian architects. For example, Ken Yeang admired him as a hero.²³ However, more importantly, his work has led to a number of contrasted readings. Anoma Pieris has argued that Bawa attempted to recreate vernacular experiences through careful paths and framed views.²⁴ Chris Abel implies that Bawa worked in the tradition of colonial architecture in the island.²⁵ Shanti Jayewardene mentioned that Bawa is a revivalist of traditional architecture but credited Bawa's efforts as an example of a resistance against the extent of the International Style.²⁶ David Robson, the author of two monographs on Bawa, argued that his architecture reflects a modern regional architecture.²⁷ Indeed, the term "regionalism" seems to have haunted Bawa. One prominent architect in Sri Lanka

and a former assistant of Bawa, C. Anjalendran, has asserted that interpreting the work of Geoffrey Bawa in such a way reflects a lack of thought and understanding.²⁸ Bawa himself rejected such categorization, stating,

I have begun to think that regionalism is what happens automatically, coming from the needs to the place If you take local materials and the general feel of the place into account, the resultant building automatically becomes regional. I do not make it regional and I do not take regionalism as a creed.²⁹

With a background of these views contesting architecture of Bawa, the dissertation endeavor to probe more incisively into the question of modernity in his work. In other words, in what sense should we appreciate Bawa's architecture? And through this, how should we interpret critically the varying attempts made by other contemporary architecture in the emerging world to embody "modernity?"

1.2. Methodology

The analysis in this dissertation is based on readings pertaining to modernity in a particular place. It borrows from a notion originating with Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, who essentially considered modernity a Western phenomenon, arguing that modernity could be understood only by "thinking through and thinking against" the concept of Western modernity.³⁰ This strategy allows for the consideration of different contexts and the inclusion of pluralities of modern experiences. It also implies an understanding of modernity that can be extended outside the Western world only through modification. Considering this argument, Gaonkar proposed the notion of site-based reading of modernity, examining modernity from a particular cultural site. This site-based reading involves what Gaonkar referred to as "creative adaptation," which "is not simply a matter of adjusting the form or recording the practice to soften the impact of modernity; rather, it points to the manifold ways in which a people question the present. It is the site in which

people 'make' themselves modern, as opposed to being 'made' modern by alien and impersonal forces, and where they give themselves an identity and a destiny."³¹

The implication of this approach is that recognizing modern qualities in case studies may be challenging. This interpretation should be analyzed with regard to the dynamics of the place. Thus, this research begins by examining selected projects to identify their peculiar characteristics. In the case of Geoffrey Bawa, in each example, the analysis focuses on an analysis of the experiences provided by the buildings, in an attempt to articulate the architect's design approach. The primary information for this analysis is data gathered from a site visit to several of the architect's projects in Sri Lanka. The excursions into his architecture were intended to examine first-hand experience with his buildings. Data collection was basically a survey to take photographs inside and around Bawa's buildings. The decisions to consider a certain spots for taking the pictures were informed by two factors. The way Bawa designed the plan, in way, prompted one to set the gaze on a certain direction. Also, Dr. Ronald Lewcock would mention that Bawa intended users and clients to stop at certain spots and appreciate the vistas. The visit to the island also intended to study varieties of local architecture, including those of the Sinhalese, the Tamils, the Muslims, contemporary architecture, as well as the legacies of the colonial powers that once dominated the island. The visits also included meetings with people who worked and associated closely with Bawa in the past, including Barbara Sansoni, Ronald Lewcock, Laki Senanayake, Anura Ratnavibhusana, and Channa Daswatte. Unfortunately, the archives of drawings and sketches from Bawa's office were inaccessible.,³² Secondary data, included publications of Bawa's works in monographs, journals, and periodicals. Beside the publications about Bawa, it also covered interviews and memoirs of people close to Bawa, particularly those of Ulrik Plesner—Bawa's former partner—and those of Donald

Friend, a distinguished Australian artist who worked in and chronicled the life of the island in the late 1950s and the early 1960s. The range of these data incorporates research and publications on Bawa, the architecture and the arts on the island, and the archival materials of letters written by Bawa and by people close to him.

The second step of this research was an examination of the atmosphere and trends in art and architecture that occurred during the time period of the selected projects, aiming at an understanding of the dynamics in the architectural world and the prevalent architectural agendas in that particular place and that particular era. In the case of Geoffrey Bawa, research in this issue revealed the anxiety felt by artists in Ceylon in the 1930s and 1940s, triggered by their desire to maintain their aesthetic ties to Ceylon but at the same time achieve artistic expression that could properly convey a sense of modernity, which showed they were part of the contemporary world. This shared anxiety would eventually become crystallized in 1943 with the formation of the 43 Group, whose paintings exemplified efforts to deal with the exposure to the works of artists such as Picasso, Matisse, and Gauguin, as well as to the phenomena unique to Ceylon, such as the Kandyan murals. This group of artists, who articulated their position regarding the atmosphere in the artistic world in Sri Lanka, would eventually influence the artistic world, including the architectural world, on the island in subsequent decades,. This part of this research attempts to articulate the desire for such expression in architecture, registering the main ideas that emerged and the dynamics of these ideas over subsequent decades. In order to address these concerns, this study has investigated studies of the history of architecture in Sri Lanka since the 1950s, relying on books and articles from both international and regional journals and magazines.

The third step of this analysis was an examination of the context of the case studies. This analysis involved readings on the historical, social, and cultural background of the selected projects, the purpose of which was to paint a picture of the cultural trends in which the architect operated and the resulting designs. In the case of Geoffrey Bawa, this analysis proposed two dimensions, the first of which was an analysis of the history of the island as a meeting point between various cultures such as the Arabs, the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the British as well as the native Sinhala and Tamil. Hence, the purpose of this step of the study was to reach an understanding of the concepts of “local,” “Sri Lanka,” or “Ceylonese” as a product of these phenomena. The second dimension of this step was an identification of the implications of the independent movement on the island in the middle of the twentieth century to provide an understanding of such constructs. In other words, an attempt has been made to capture the essence of the cultural trends and agendas that occurred in Sri Lanka during the period of the selected projects. In order to achieve this purpose, this process borrowed not only from architectural writings, but also from research that has been done in the fields of history, sociology, and anthropology. The findings from this series of analyses were then related to the current understanding of modernity. This discussion of modernity referred to theories of modernity in relation to the terms “modern,” “modernity,” and “modernization.”

1.3. Thesis Outline

This dissertation is divided into six chapters. Chapter One outlines the problem that this dissertation seeks to address and the methodology used to address it. Chapter Two analyzes selected cases from Geoffrey Bawa’s oeuvre. The case studies seek to highlight particular features of his work and to reconstruct design problems with which the architect had to deal. Chapter Three reconstructs the intellectual and personal

history of the architect, analyzing various aspects that are seen as contributing to the crystallization of Bawa's architectural ideas. It examines influences from his circle of artists and architects, mainly his partner, Ulrik Plesner. It progresses to examine the history of the art and architecture of the island. A discussion on the socio-political history of the island, including the experiences of the Burgher community on the island, also forms a part in the analysis of the personal history of Bawa. In general, this chapter aims to unfold the experience with modernity in Sri Lanka from the middle of the twentieth century.

Chapter Four aims to expand the reading of modernity as a site-specific practice. This chapter will analyze examples from the work of architects in different cultural situations. Findings from the analysis of Bawa's work will provide a platform on which comparisons of his work can be derived from the readings. Chapter Five offers a more detailed account of the concept of modernity, continuing the discussion related to the distinction between *Kultur* and *Zivilization*. Following this line of thought, this chapter dwells on the understanding of modernity as an attitude, as mentioned by Foucault through his reading of Kant and Baudelaire. This chapter also examines Walter Benjamin's view on modernity. Essentially, it provides a philosophical account on the notion of modernity as exemplified in the work of Bawa. Chapter Six concludes the thesis. The conclusions contribute to the understanding of modernity in architecture in a specific location. On a more focused level, they also contribute to an appreciation of the work of Geoffrey Bawa, revealing his oeuvre as an exemplar of what modern architecture might achieve in Asia.

Notes to Chapter 1:

¹ Banham, Reyner, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (London: The Architectural Press, 1960).

² Vidler, Anthony, "The Production of Type," *Oppositions* 8 (1977), reprinted in K. Michael Hays (ed.) *Oppositions Reader: Selected essays 1973-1984* (Princeton: Princeton Arch. Press, 1999), 437.

³ Jordy, William, "The Symbolic Essence of Modern European Architecture of the Twenties and Its Continuing Influences," originally published in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 22, no. 3, (Oct. 1963); republished in Jordy, *"Symbolic Essence" and Other Writings on Modern Architecture and American Culture* (New York: Yale Univ. Press, 2005), 140.

⁴ Tafuri, Manfredo, *Theories and History of Architecture* (New York: Harper and Court, 1976, original Italian edition, 1966). See also Tafuri, M., *Architecture and Utopia*, (Bari, Italy: Guis. Laterza & Figli, 1973; Cambridge, Mass., : MIT Press, 1976).

⁵ "Architecture is the result of the state of mind of its time. We are facing an event in contemporary thought; an important event, which we didn't realize ten years ago; the techniques, the problem raised, like scientific means to solve them, are universal. Nevertheless, there will be no confusion of regions; for climatic, geographic, topographic conditions, the currents of race and thousands of things still today unknown, will always guide solutions toward forms conditioned by them (Le Corbusier)." Quoted in Colquhoun, Alan, "Critique of Regionalism," originally published in Casabella, (January-February 1996): 50-55; reprinted in Canizaro, Vincent, *Architectural Regionalism: Collected writings on place, identity, modernity, and tradition*, (New York: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007) 144.

⁶ Tafuri, M., *Architecture and Utopia*, (Bari, Italy: Guis. Laterza & Figli, 1973; Cambridge, Mass., : MIT Press, 1976).

⁷ Jordy, William, "The International Style in the 1930s," originally in *JSAH* 24 (March 1965), republished in Jordy, *"Symbolic Essence" and Other Writings on Modern Architecture and American Culture* (New York: Yale Univ. Press, 2005) 151-158.

⁸ Curtis, William J., *Modern Architecture Since 1900, 3rd ed.*, (London: Phaidon, 1996), 339.

⁹ Pallasmaa, Juhani, "Tradition and Modernity: The feasibility of Regional architecture in Post-Modern Society," originally published in *The Architectural Review* (May 1988), republished in V. Canizaro (ed.), *Architectural Regionalism: Collected writings on place, identity, modernity, and tradition* (New York: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007), 132-33.

¹⁰ Porphyrios, Demetri, *Sources of Modern Criticism: Studies on Alvar Aalto*, (London, New York: Academy Editions, 1982), 109-112. See also Porphyrios, Demetri, "The Burst of Memory: An essay on Alvar Aalto's typological conception of design," in *Architectural Design*, 5-6 (1979), 143-48. Aalto charges vocabularies from the modern movement with metaphorical references to the past, such as the allusion to the three-partite divisions of an Italian Palazzo, the spatial arrangement of the Scandinavian manor houses, or the articulation of the main hall in public buildings.

¹¹ Mumford, Lewis, *The South in Architecture: The Dancy Lectures, Alabama College, 1941* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1941), 23-39, 51-52 He pointed to "the local, time-bound, that which adapts itself to special human capacities and circumstances, that belongs to a particular people and a particular soils and a particular set of economic and political institutions. Let us call this the regional element, though one must of course include in this term far more than the purely geographic characteristics. The other element is the universal: this element passes over boundaries and frontiers; it unites in a common bond people of the most diverse races and temperaments; it transcends the local, the limited, the partial (Mumford, Lewis, *The South in Architecture*, 51-52)."

¹² *Ibid.*, 54-62

¹³ *Ibid.*, 92-104

¹⁴ Tafuri, Manfredo; Dal Co, Francesco, *Modern Architecture 2* (New York: Electa/Rizzoli, 1976), 331-36.

¹⁵ Mumford, Lewis, "The Skyline: Status quo," *New Yorker*, no. 23 (11 Oct. 1947) 106-9, reprinted in V. Canizaro (ed.), *Architectural Regionalism: Collected writings on place, identity, modernity, and tradition* (New York: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007), 291

¹⁶ The Museum of Modern Art, "What is Happening to Modern Architecture," *The Bulletin of the Museum of Modern Art*, XV, no. 3 (Spring 1948), reprinted in V. Canizaro (ed.), *Architectural Regionalism: Collected writings on place, identity, modernity, and tradition* (New York: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007), 307. Mumford wrote further: "To me, that is a sample of internationalism, not a sample of localism and limited effort. Any local effort, if worth anything, is worth reproducing elsewhere; and any universal formula that is worth anything must always be susceptible of being brought home—otherwise it lacks true universality." Mumford's argument in the *New Yorker* drew a rebuttal from architects associated with the International Style, culminating in a symposium held at the Museum of Modern Art, which brought together Mumford and the proponent on the International Style. See The Museum of Modern Art, "What is Happening to Modern Architecture," in V. Canizaro (ed.), *Architectural Regionalism*, 293-309. In that symposium, Alfred H. Barr

defended the International Style, arguing that it was not dogmatic in the choice of forms and materials while attacking the rising interest in wooden domestic buildings, such as exemplified by the Bay Region and the New Empiricism, and calling them the International Cottage Style. Hitchcock argued that the underlying issue was the problem of expression in architecture, in which the Cottage Style provided a more domestic expression. However, he asserted that such an expression was not important compared to the expression of the industrial life of the International Style. Furthermore, Gropius argued that the leading modernists in the 1920s also considered the terrain, the climate and the way of life as much as the adherence of the Bay Region Style.

¹⁷ Colquhoun, Alan, "Critique of Regionalism," originally published in *Casabella* (January-February 1996), 50-55; reprinted in V. Canizaro, (ed.) *Architectural Regionalism: Collected writings on place, identity, modernity, and tradition*, (New York: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007), 141-2

¹⁸ Colquhoun, Alan, "The Concept of Regionalism," originally published in *Postcolonial Space(s)*, Gulsum Baydar Nalbantoglu and Wong Chong Thai, ed., (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997), 13-23; in V. Canizaro, (ed.) *Architectural Regionalism: Collected writings on place, identity, modernity, and tradition*, (New York: Princeton Univ. press, 2007), 147-50

¹⁹ Giedion, Sigfried, "The State of Contemporary Architecture I: The Regional Approach," *Architectural Record* (January 1954), 132-37

²⁰ Fry, Maxwell; Drew, Jane, *Tropical Architecture in the Dry and Humid Zone* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Co., 1964 (1954)).

²¹ Jayewardene, Shanti, "Bawa: A Contribution to Cultural Regeneration," *Mimar: Architecture in Development* 19, (1986): 47-49. Thus, she argues, that modern architecture is essentially a form of capitalists' exploitations of the third world, capturing overseas market for the purpose of the expansion of markets.

²² Boussora, Kenza, "Regionalism: Lessons from Algeria and the Middle East" originally published in *Mimar: Architecture in Development* 10, no: 3, (September 1990): 64-71, republished in V. Canizaro (ed.), *Architectural Regionalism: Collected writings on place, identity, modernity, and tradition* (New York: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007), 121-127.

²³ Ken Yeang has said: 'For many of us ... Geoffrey will always have a special place in our hearts and in our minds. He is our first hero and guru,' (quoted from Keniger, Michael, *Bawa: Recent projects 1987-95*, (Brisbane: Queensland chapter of the RIAA, 1996), in Robson, David, *Geoffrey Bawa: The Complete Works*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002), 12)

²⁴ Pieris, Anoma, "Beyond the Vernacular House," Patrick Bingham-Hall, Geoffrey London (ed.), *Houses for the 21st Century*, (Sydney: Periplus Edition, 2004), 49-50; see also her comments on Bawa in Pieris, Anoma, "Modernism at the margins of the vernacular: considering Valentine Gunasekara," *Grey Room* 28 (Summer 2007): 65-77

²⁵ Abel, Chris, *Architecture and Identity*, (Oxford and Boston: Architectural Press, 2000) 170.

²⁶ Jayewardene, Shanti, "Bawa: A Contribution to Cultural Regeneration," 47-49. This article was a summary of her Master's thesis at the Architectural Association. She argued that this thesis was the only academic exploration of Bawa's work. See Jayewardene, "Can Robson be Bawa's Sole Defender?," *The SundayTimes Plus, Sunday*, March 2, 2008.

²⁷ Robson, David, *Geoffrey Bawa: The Complete Works*, 261-62; and *Beyond Bawa: Modern Masterworks of Monsoon Asia* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2002) 258-59.

²⁸ "But to reduce Geoffrey's Architecture to the mere vernacular, despite his incredible knowledge of building craftsmanship is to miss the point—especially when his architectural vocabulary has little geographical limit, and has the advantage of wide travel and more often the influence of the numerous interesting and amusing persons who weave through his life. (Anjalendran, C., *Letter to Dr. Lewcock*, Sept. 11th, 1985, retrieved from Dr. Lewcock's archives)."

²⁹ Interview with Jimmy Lim (Robson, David, *Geoffrey Bawa*, (London, 2002), 262).

³⁰ Gaonkar, Gaonkar, Dilip Parameshwar, "On Alternative Modernities," *Public Culture*, 11(1) (1999): 1-18. This paper was reiterated as his keynote address to the IX International Docomomo Conference in Ankara, Turkey, September 27th, 2006. It is worth to note that most of the papers and presentations in the IX International Docomomo Conference, with its theme of "Other Modernism," put emphasis on the way in which the International Style was inserted to various different places or even maintained its purity. It seems that the tendency was to equate Modernism with the International Style.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 16.

³² However, archives might not be of a concern for Bawa. For example, Anjalendran wrote, " ... drawings are disregarded except as a starting point for communication and costing but are often redrawn for publication once finished." (Anjalendran, C., *Letter to Dr. Lewcock*, Sept. 11th, 1985, retrieved from Dr. Lewcock's archives.) It is also

worth noting that all of published drawings of Bawa's work in various monographs and periodicals were drawings that were redrawn long after the buildings were constructed. In this vein, Laki Senanayake contributed greatly in forming a particular drawing style that characterized the appearance of Bawa's work in prints.

Chapter 2

The Past and the Present in the Works of Geoffrey Bawa

2.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to discuss the issues of modernism and context in architecture. It approaches this task through an analysis of case studies from one architect, the late Geoffrey Bawa of Sri Lanka. During his lifetime, Bawa produced a rich body of architectural works that often highlighted features familiarly associated with architectural features of the island of Sri Lanka. His designs suggest a careful exploration on his journey to arrive at an appropriate architecture for the island. What are the sets of intentions that can be read from the works? How do we understand his works in relation to the issues of modernity, abstraction, and authenticity?

2.2. Geoffrey Bawa of Sri Lanka

Geoffrey Bawa was born in Sri Lanka, known at that time as Ceylon, on July 23, 1919, to a wealthy family. His family reflected the rich culture of the island with a claim of mixed ancestry consisting of the Burghers, the Muslims, the Sinhalese, and the native Tamils. He studied law in Cambridge, England, in 1938. Following his study in England, he traveled extensively in Europe before returning to Ceylon in 1946. He traveled abroad again before started to practice law in 1948. In 1951, he decided to switch to architecture and went back to study at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in the United Kingdom between 1953 and 1956. Beginning in 1957, he practiced architecture in Ceylon, eventually establishing himself as one of the elder statesmen of Asian architecture. He was made an Honorary Fellow of the American

Institute of Architects in 1983, and his architecture has been exhibited by the Royal Institute of British Architects. In 2001, he received the Aga Khan Chairman's Award for Lifetime Achievement, an honor that has been given only to Hassan Fathy of Egypt in 1980 and to Rifat Chadirji of Iraq in 1986. Bawa passed away in 2003.

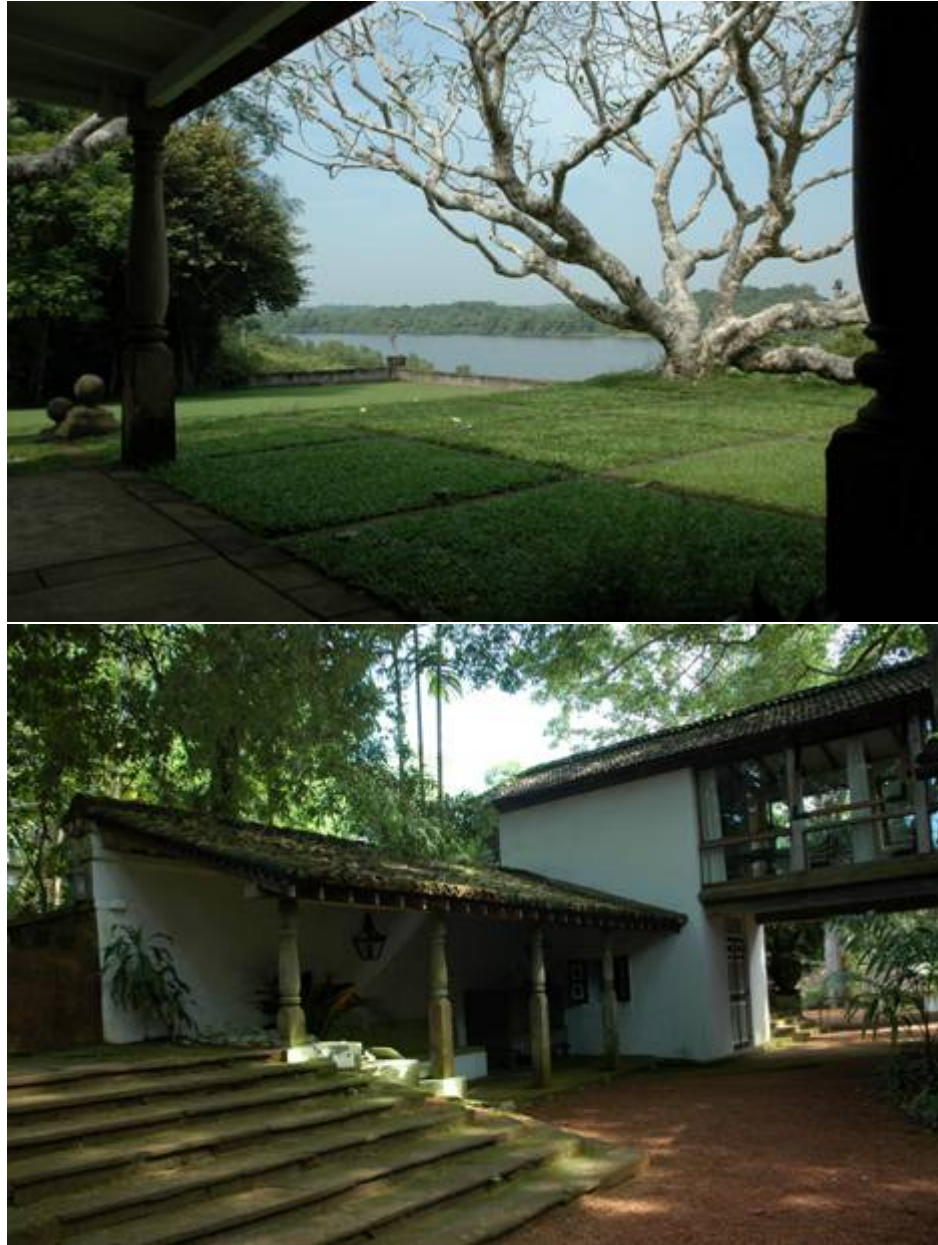


Figure 2.1: Lunuganga, Bawa's house and garden



Figure 2.2: The architect's house, Colombo



Figure 2.3: The Bentota Beach Hotel, Bentota



Figure 2.4: Serendib Hotel, Bentota



Figure 2.5: The Neptune Hotel, Beruwela



Figure 2.6: Subodhi Institute of Integral Education, Piliyandala



Figure 2.7: The Club Villa resort, formerly Bawa's villa, Bentota



Figure 2.8: Kandalama Hotel, Kandalama

2.3. Analyses of Case Studies

A careful and close examination of Bawa's oeuvre reveals a picture in which the architect displays subtle and playful references to many facets of the communal and personal history of Sri Lankans, including the Sinhalese, the colonial Portuguese, and the Dutch. Furthermore, external factors that include his passion for Italian design and his modernist education add a broader dimension to his work. These internal and external factors foreground the complexity of attempts to define a particular frame of understanding of Bawa's work. This chapter addresses these issues by analyzing the designs of the Ena de Silva House, the Yahapath Endera School, and the Heritage Hotel, formerly known as the Triton Hotel.¹ The value of these analyses is the belief that Bawa's works exemplify a strong consistency in his formal and spatial strategy throughout almost five decades of architectural practice. Hence, this analysis may be viewed as a representation of a lifetime of work of a leading modernist architect in Asia.²

2.3.1. The Ena de Silva House (1960-62)

2.3.1.1. Background and the description of the Ena de Silva house

The Ena de Silva House was commissioned by the de Silva family, who belonged to the upper class in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Ena de Silva was one of the most prolific batik artists on the island while her husband, Osmund, was a government official and her son a promising talent in the visual arts.³ The site for the house was a small urban lot on Alfred Road, a prime location in Colombo. The program for the house included an office for the husband, a work space for the son, and accommodations for guests. The house was designed during the height of Bawa's collaboration with Ulrik Plesner and it marked a significant point in the oeuvre of Bawa and Plesner, attaining a stature as their first important collaborative work.⁴ As a background, the populist

movement that gained an upper hand on the island nation since the mid-1950s had steered the economy in a direction of a state-controlled economy. In both political and social spheres, the 1960s also witnessed the crystallization of Sri Lankan nationalism. According to Robson, the de Silvas wanted to have a modern house that also incorporated Kandyan features, which would reflect many traits of Sri Lankan architecture, and they also wanted to do away with the use of the air-conditioning system (figure 2. 9).⁵ The request for Kandyan features led naturally to references to *walauwe*, the Kandyan manor house. The problem for the designer seemed to be how to accommodate a program that called for a Kandyan *walauwe* in a very tight urban lot. At the same time, the house had to be a dwelling for a nuclear, urban, middle class family that was considered modern, thus presenting a challenge to negotiate the relationship between the *walauwe* and a modern house on the island.



Figure 2.9: The Ena de Silva House, floor plan and roof plan (*Source: Taylor, 1986*); a diagram of the section of the house, showing the sleeping areas in shades (*based on Taylor, 1986*)

The Ena de Silva House sits on an almost rectangular site, bounded on three sides by party walls and open to Alfred Road on the fourth, short side. The original plan of the house reveals the grouping of functions that included the two-stories living quarters for the family in the back, a guest wing in the front, and service quarters, including a garage, as a long, narrow bar across the length of the site. A large courtyard with a large temple tree just slightly off the center of the courtyard and giant stone mills at the corners creates the most noticeable feature in the house. Besides this large courtyard, the plan also features a series of six smaller courtyards. Visitors enter the house from the street through the main entrance that is slightly off axis, passing through a narrow courtyard before entering the actual entrance to the house, a small antique door. This door leads to a narrow, tunnel-like space that abruptly opens to the large

courtyard. The verandahs that line this courtyard direct visitors to the living and dining rooms. Meanwhile, the visitors' are able to view directly through the living quarters to the courtyard in the back. Continuing this verandah is the spiral staircase to the second floor that leads to the bedrooms and the bathroom.

2.3.1.2. Experiences inside the house

At first glance, the house seems to offer a series of familiar features. The street frontage offers a view of a whitewashed wall topped with a sloped roof that is clad with clay tiles. The entrances are antique doors salvaged from old buildings. The house itself strongly emphasizes the use of thick, brick walls. The whitewashed walls are a common feature used in the buildings of the Sinhalese, the Tamils, the Muslims, and the Europeans on the island. One of the openings, a small window on the shaft of the staircase, is designed with a slanted frame, creating a light scoop and resembling a sniper window in Dutch forts. The courtyard reminds visitors of the courtyards in the Sinhalese *walauwe* or in colonial houses. The open ground floor of the living quarters is a reminder of the wide verandah of the *walauwe* and colonial mansions, and the bedrooms on the second floor allude to the *piano nobile* in Portuguese colonial houses. The architects placed a series of *mashrabiyya* on the second floor facing the main courtyard. Louvered doors and windows used in the house are similar to the doors and the windows of colonial houses. Precisely, the house taps into features of various buildings on the island, encompassing buildings of the Sinhalese, the Tamils, the Muslims, the Dutch, and the Portuguese (figure 2.10).



Figure 2.10: Interior view of the house

Despite the use of elements commonly found in the architecture of the island, these features are not simply a copy. To begin with, the organizations of the plans and the sections of the house articulate the use of courtyards as the organizing element, reflecting the organization of a *walauwe*. Often, a *walauwe* would also have a series of secondary, smaller courtyards, creating a cluster organization. The Ena de Silva House deviates from the common organization of a *walauwe* in the organization of its courtyards in a sequential manner, leading to a reading of a layering of open and enclosed spaces. The main courtyard of the Ena de Silva House is in a rectangular shape with biaxial symmetry. However, this symmetry is not reflected in the whole arrangement of the house, which instead relies on the symmetry along the transverse axis (figure 2. 11). The play of asymmetry in the Ena de Silva House seems to echo the

basic organization of a *walauwe*, in which the notion of symmetry and axuality on a global scale is never strong (figure 2.12, 2.13). The architects inserted tiny courtyards in the service area and in the guest wing, each of which is directly related to particular activities in those quarters (figure 2.13). In this way, two concepts emerged from the architects' strategies. The first was the basic arrangement of a linear courtyard house. In a way, the organization of the house, with its multiple courtyards, presents an ambiguous reading of the centralized courtyard common to a Kandyan *walauwe*, and of a linear courtyard. The second was the notion of individualized courtyards, in which each room was oriented toward its own courtyard and the idea of functionality in which different programs have been determined for different courtyards.⁶ All of the bedrooms are pushed to the front, directly facing the main courtyard. A transversal corridor connects these bedrooms and it opens to the long, narrow court at the back.



Figure 2.11: Diagram—plan with axes and circulation path (*based on a plan in Taylor, 1986*)

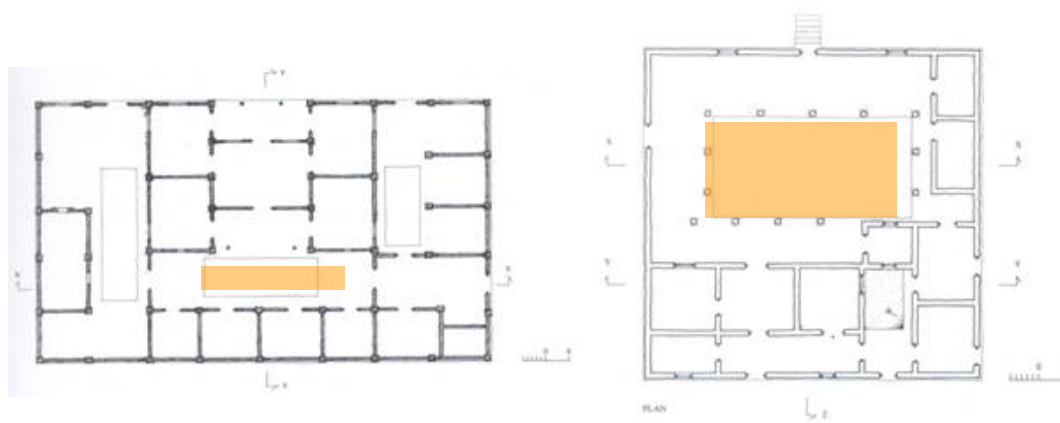


Figure 2.12: Sri Lankan *waluwes* (*Based on Lewcock, Senanayake, Sansoni, 1998*)



Figure 2.13: Diagram—peripheral gaps (*based on a plan in Taylor, 1986*)

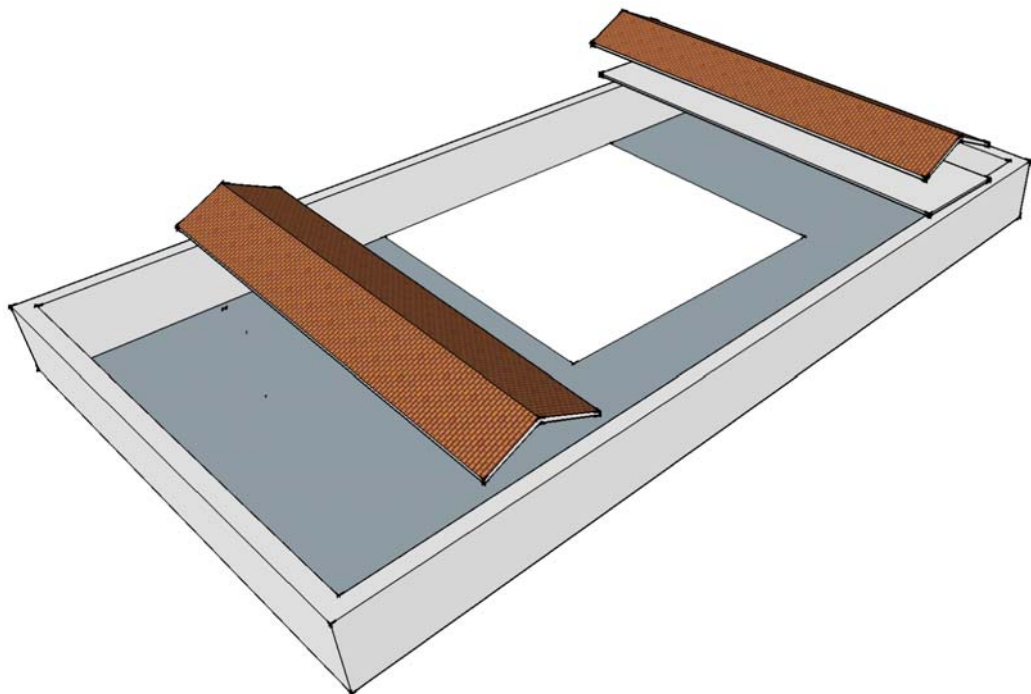


Figure 2.14: Diagram—courtyard and roof-umbrella

The immediate impression of the house is the experience of a series of courtyards, carefully attuned to the human scale. Following this feature, the appearance of elements used in the design also reinforces the sense of familiarity. The most prominent visual clue is its simple pitched roofs. According to Plesner, the design of the house marked a point at which Bawa and Plesner intentionally designed the roof as a visual element that characterized the architecture of the island.⁷ In their previous work, the architects tended to design the roof with a very low angle, stressing a horizontal character similar to that of a flat roof.⁸ Plesner underscores the importance of the Ena de Silva House:

That was the first house where the whole thing came into fruition. The whole concept of the big roof. About protection from the rain and sun and nothing else and letting air go though. She had all these carpenters and skills up on the estate in Aluvihare and we got huge satinwood columns that she fetched from the jungle. It was a kind of a whole mutual inspiration society, between Ena and him and me.⁹

With its extended verandahs, the house seems to display the roofs as umbrellas hovering above the space, highlighting the idea of sheltering. Visually, the roofs appear to contain the essence of common buildings with their profiles rather than their shapes. Furthermore, the roofs are covered with clay tiles that are commonly used on the island.

The second prominent visual characteristic is the use of thick, white walls, which provide an impression that the house is based on wall structures. However, the exposed structure on the ceiling in the living and dining rooms reveals the use of simple, concrete frame structures, a type of construction that usually relies on modular, repeated bays. In addition, columnar elements, which appear in the use of columns that support the roof of the verandahs around the courtyard, are made of polished satin wood commonly used on the island (figure 2.15). Each column is topped with a stone capital, the distinction of which reminisces the columns in the Kandyan *wala*uwe, which often borrowed the

concept of the Doric columns of colonial houses (figure 2.15). However, instead of making replicas of historical columns, the architects created an allusion by emphasizing the profile of the column, suggesting that it has a body and a capital. The figurative treatment of the columns is enhanced by the presence of water spouts along the edge of the roof. The use of structural systems and materials such as clay tiles, coconut wood, and bricks represents common techniques and materials on the island. The use of wide eaves together with the courtyard filled with vegetations, creates shade and thus a comfortable temperature in the house.



Figure 2.15: Columns; A view of a Sinhalese *walaue* (Source: Lewcock, Sansoni, Senanayake)

As visitors enter the main courtyard of the Ena de Silva House, they will directly face the *mashrabiyya*, latticework appearing on the windows of traditional residences in Arabic homes, on the second floor (figure 2.16). With this shuttered window, Bawa and Plesner maintained the visual continuity between the bedrooms and the courtyard while blurring the gaze from the opposite direction. This *mashrabiyya* remind us of the *piano nobile* in Portuguese colonial houses and also of the street façades of Arabic homes (figure 2.16). In a way, the architects treated the interior façade as if it were an exterior façade, creating a reverse arrangement in which the actual exterior façade was treated as a blank wall while the interior façade around the courtyard was celebrated as the street façade.



Figure 2.16: Inner courtyard with *piano-nobile* of the Ena de Silva House; Drawings of Muslim houses and *mashrabiyya* (Source: Lewcock, Sansoni, Senanayake, 1998)

The spatial and visual experiences of the Ena de Silva House hint at features from the past and the present. In contrast, the organization of the program strongly relates to that of the contemporary Sri Lankan household. Programmatically, the long,

narrow part accommodates the servants' quarters, and the wider part contains the living area and guest wings. The longitudinal wall acts as a screen, dividing the site into two unequal parts, each of which accommodates a different group of functions. This arrangement implies clarity in the organization of functions and a strong distinction between the service and the served parts of the household. The longitudinal wall, then, plays a series of roles, including directing the movement on the ground floor, marking the distinction between the served and the service areas, and serving as a structure that separates the wings from the courts. Besides the clarity in the horizontal organization of functions, the residential wings exemplify clarity in the vertical organization, in which active functions are grouped and separated from sleeping activities on different floors. In this way, the architects turn the living and dining areas into a broad veranda that often borders the courtyard in a *walauwe*, even in colonial mansions. This strategy evokes a characteristic of a *walauwe*, in which daily activities occur on internal verandahs. Observations of the interior space of the house reveal the use of built-in shelves, beds, sinks and toilets as part of the walls or elevated platforms (figure 2.17). All of these features articulate an idea that each room is designed for a specific purpose that is then articulated through the treatment of the architectural elements of platforms and walls. The design also seems to emphasize a minimalistic quality in the design of built-in furniture and appliances. In addition, the use of space and the position of the human body in spaces are strictly prescribed. The use of familiar elements throughout the house is juxtaposed with strong novelty in the ordering of the use of each space.



Figure 2.17: Interior elements

2.3.1.3. The ordering of memories

I have traced the features that are common in the architecture of the island and that are used by Bawa and Plesner in the Ena de Silva House and the degrees to which these elements differ from more common features. A passage into the house seems to reveal that the architects intended to arrange visitors so that they would move from one compartmentalized, framed space to another in a tight sequence. Each of these spaces has a strong physical boundary and a strong emphasis on the basic rectangular shape. Strong local symmetry is emphasized in the reading of the simple geometric shape of each space. However, on a global level, the design evades the sense of axuality. The house, with its openness, is actually a sequence of experiential space in which the linking of vistas connects different areas. The architects also carefully controlled the vistas by placing certain objects such as the grinding stones and the old doors as focal points, which also added to the sense of surprise of finding unexpected objects. The layering of spaces creates a sense of depth that transforms the smallness of the site to openness and transparency. Within this sequence of experiences, the architects incorporated a wide range of features of the architecture of the island. As an illustration, the temple tree, the giant stones in the courtyard, and the carefully arranged furniture in the living and dining areas become figurative elements choreographed between the columns (figure 2.18). The openness of a *walauwe* seems to be celebrated and elevated to a principle that governs the plan. However, despite its seemingly open plan, the plan of the house exhibits a very strict arrangement that governs the choreography of view and the use of spaces.



Figure 2.18: Sequence of views

2.3.2. Yahapath Endera/Halghasena Farm School, Hanwella (1965-71)

2.3.2.1. Background and description of the school

In 1965, Bawa and Plesner were asked to design a farm school for orphaned girls at Hanwella, a plantation estate, by a group of Catholic missionaries. The school, which would serve as a training facility and home for the girls, represented a large-scale project similar to Bawa's other projects undertaken in the 1970's and 1980's, such as the Piliyandela Education Center and Ruhunu University, in terms of planning and the attention to the site.¹⁰ The project won the Pan-Pacific Citation from the American Institute of Architects in 1966 for its application of rural-based technology and materials.¹¹ This recognition might have reflected the dynamics of the economic policy on the island, in which the direction toward a state-controlled economy tightened its grip, including the aim of a self-sustaining economy and limitations on imported goods, which also affected the construction sector. Indeed, the school was constructed using materials common in the area, including coconut timber, clay tiles, bricks, and plaster.¹² The program for the school included a convent for the nuns who would run the farming facility, a dormitory for the students, classes, kitchen and dining areas, a house for the priest, a chapel, several barns, and sheds for chickens and cattle. The site of the farm school, incorporating an existing villa, is located on top of a hill in a rural area in the highland in the center of the island. Unfortunately, the buildings have been neglected and thus fallen into a state of disrepair.

In an article published shortly after the completion of this school, Bawa cited two examples of Ceylonese buildings, one of which was this school. In his article, he laid out two conditions of satisfactory architecture, the first of which was the accommodation of needs and the second an accordance to and sympathy with the "lush beauty, rains and

suns, dramatic sky and fertile land”¹³ that created the Ceylonese ambience. Although this statement sounded more poetic than practical, Bawa’s thinking was, in essence, extremely practical. After all, it derived from lessons from the architectural history of Sri Lanka that stressed the importance of designing buildings that incorporated design features that adapted to particular aspects of the island. For example, he pointed to the use of Sinhalese tiles, an element originating with the Portuguese. He also underlined efforts by the Portuguese and the Dutch to overcome the problem of rain and ventilation through the use of high-pitched roofs and wide eaves and verandahs. His reference to “needs” also seemed to encompass more than the functional concerns, incorporating both the “physical and spiritual contentment.”¹⁴ The challenge for the architects, then, was to accommodate these functions with respect to the site, the climate, and the presence of the existing villa. Thus, the project involved the creation of a “Ceylonese building” that assimilated features derived from the architecture of the island.

The school exemplified Bawa’s efforts to deal with multiple buildings on a relatively large site. The existing villa accommodated the nuns, with the house for the priest and a waiting pavilion for the guests nearby (figure 2.19). To the north of this villa, Bawa placed a building for the dormitory, the classroom, and the dining facilities. The farm school formed two clusters: the villa with sheds surrounding it in a U-shaped arrangement and the dormitory with the remaining sheds and barns in an L-shaped courtyard arrangement. The proposed chapel was situated in the space between the villa and the dormitory. The architects arranged various buildings in each cluster around a series of courtyards, distributed in a north-south direction. However, despite this orthogonal arrangement in the plan, the placement of the buildings actually followed the topography of the site, with the dormitory and the villa located on the highest level, accentuating the primary function of the compound. Indeed, the unbuilt chapel, along

with a Banyan tree next to it, would have crowned the arrangement at the highest point of the hill, creating a pinwheel site plan in which the church would serve as a pivotal point. The dormitory compound consisted of two long, parallel, rectangular buildings forming a courtyard in the middle. The buildings were whitewashed structures, topped by pitched roofs covered with clay tiles, with overhanging eaves that covered the verandahs on both sides of each building. The walls on the long side of the buildings were only halfway up the elevation of the buildings, accentuating the brick columns that supported the roof. The architects placed a second, smaller courtyard at the end of the dormitory building, bordered by white-washed walls, three wash rooms, and a bakery.

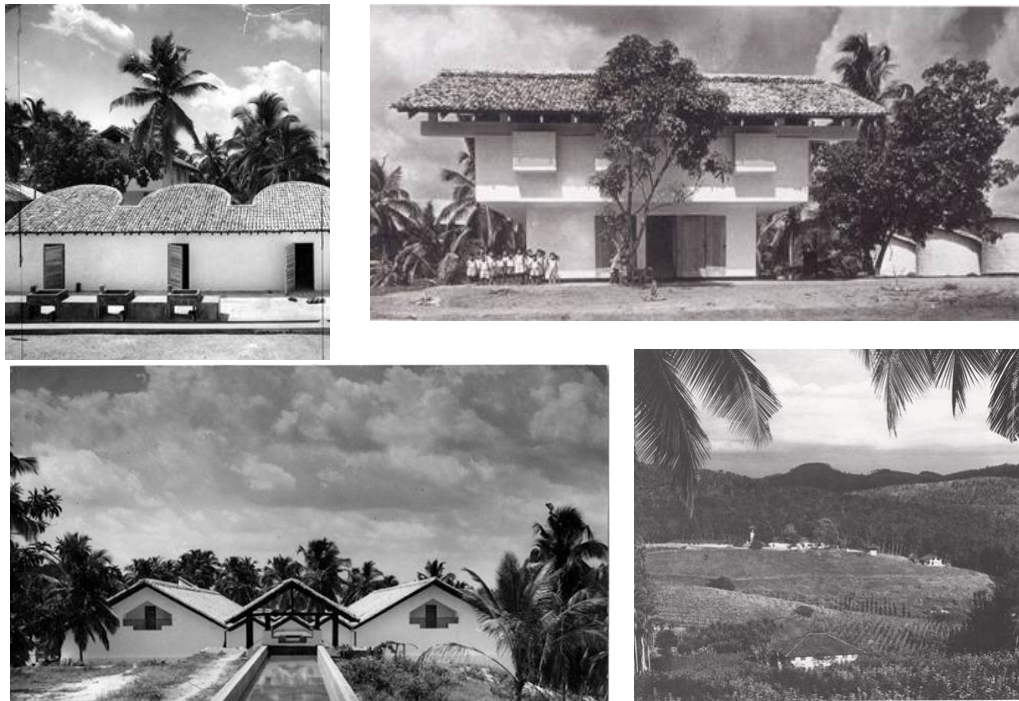


Figure 2.19: Views of the Hanwella school (Source: Taylor, 1986)

2.3.2.2. Features of the school

A circuitous path connects the main road at the bottom of the hill to the campus that reveals the buildings in gradation. The design of the path, again, demonstrates Bawa's tendency to set the path of a choreographed itinerary that would reveal buildings from certain angles. Incorporating vistas of the surrounding area and creating a drama as one nears the building, the architects used the magnificent view of the surrounding hillside as a backdrop for the profile of the roofs. The profile of the building enunciated the significance of the shape of the roof, as articulated in the following statement: "The roof, its shape, texture, and proportion, is the strongest visual factor."¹⁵ The roofs are covered with half-round tiles, strengthening one's experience of viewing a particular texture related to common roofs in Sri Lanka. Although the shape of the roof does not specifically conform to the shape found in Sinhalese or Portuguese architecture, the profiles of the multiple roofs articulate the belief in the importance of the roofs in Sri Lankan architecture. Through the interplay of different sizes and scale, the profiles of the roofs represent the rich, picturesque silhouette of the skyline in rural Sri Lanka. However, the dormitory/school buildings seem to be a reminiscent of the warehouses of the Portuguese Colonial Era, with their long masses and high-pitched roofs. The organization of the buildings also leaves an impression of a village. The architects seem to introduce formality by organizing clusters of buildings in a more orthogonal manner and by emphasizing basic rectangular shapes in the courtyards and buildings (figure 2.20, 2.21, 2.22, 2.23, 2.24). However, Bawa and Plesner seem to loosely recall the organization of Sinhalese villages, in which various buildings, houses, and sheds are clustered around a series of open spaces (figure 2.25). The symmetrical consequence of the presence of the axis, however, is offset by the two long buildings, which are not perfectly aligned. In addition, the architects place the two arms in a pinwheel plan, creating a sense of rotational symmetry.



Figure 2.20: Diagram of the courtyards (*based on a plan in Taylor, 1986*)

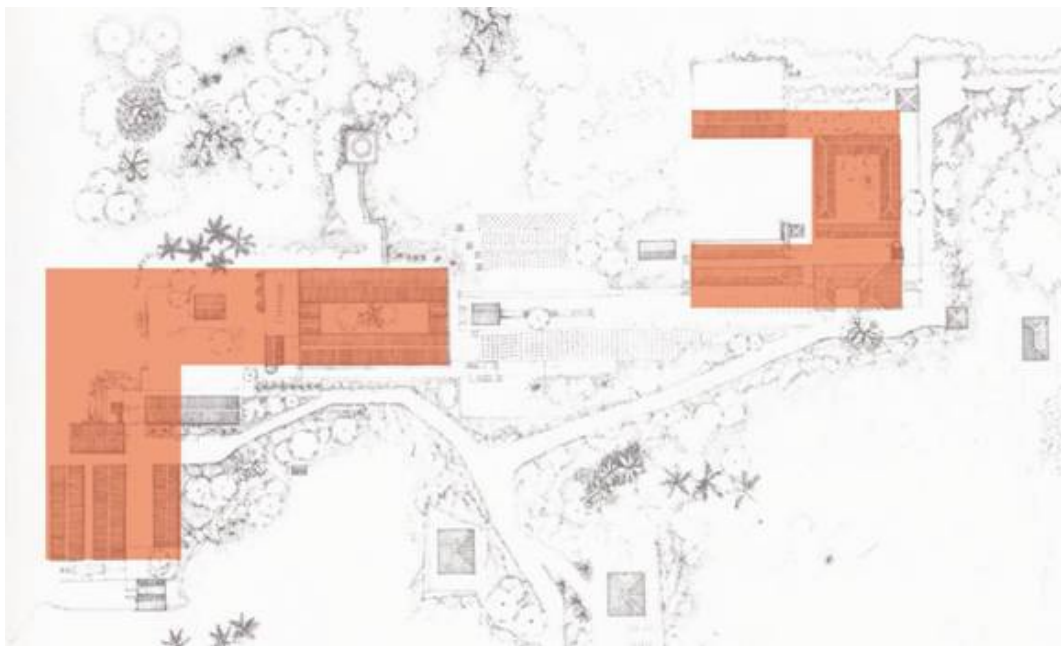


Figure 2.21: Diagram of the L- and U-shaped clusters (*based on a plan in Taylor, 1986*)

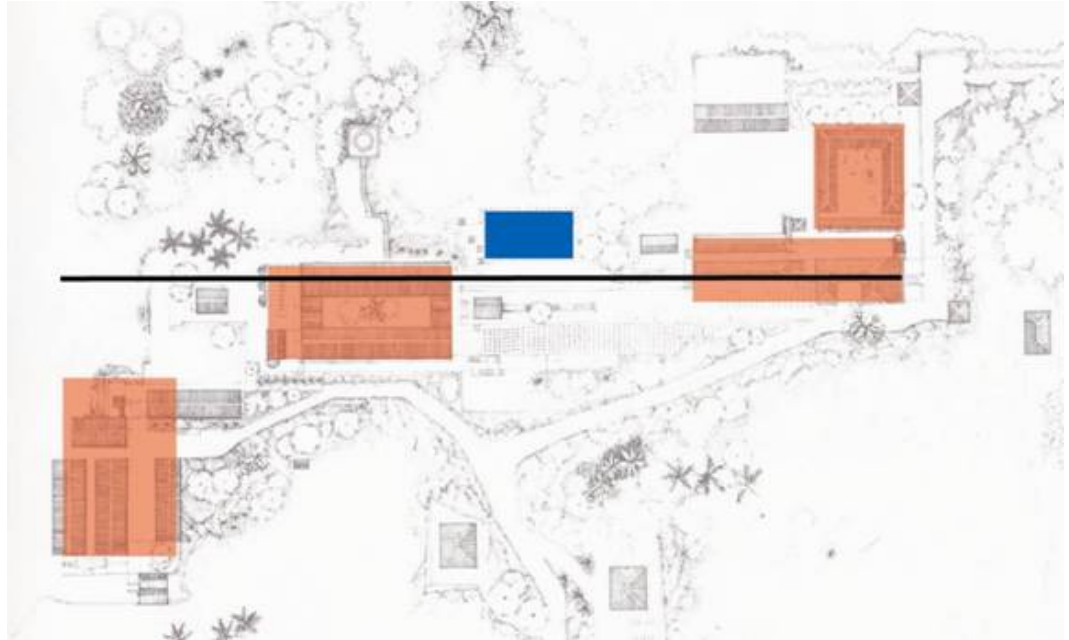


Figure 2.22: Diagram of the pinwheel plan (*based on a plan in Taylor, 1986*)



Figure 2.23: Diagram of the path and axis (*based on a plan in Taylor, 1986*)



Figure 2.24: Sinhalese village (*based on Lewcock, Sansoni, Senanayake, 1998*)



Figure 2.25: Diagram of the figure ground (*based on a plan in Taylor, 1986*)

Meanwhile, the arrangement of the dormitory unit seems to mimic the arrangement of the houses of Buddhist monks (figure 2.26, 2.27, 2.28, 2.29, 2.30), which typically features a formalized courtyard house based on an elongated rectangular shape that exemplifies biaxial features and a strong symmetry in both the courtyard and the enclosures.¹⁶ The courtyard that is lined with colonnaded verandahs of these houses clearly serves as the focal point. However, in the Hanwella School, the floor plan and the façades of the building seem to turn away from the courtyard and, instead, face the interior space. Further, the interior and the exterior façades are treated in the same manner. Thus, in this school, the courtyard retains the formal characteristics of the courtyard of a Sri Lankan house, lined with a broad, colonnaded verandah. However, its role shifts from a focal point into an organizing device in which adjoining spaces are closed off. Besides resembling Buddhist monk houses, the plan of the school also bears resemblance to plans of Dutch institutional building, which often featured narrow buildings surrounding an elongated courtyard. In the plan for a Dutch hospital in Colombo (figure 2.31), for example, the axes of the elongated courtyard coincide with the axes of the entire structure. Furthermore, the main entrance articulates the short axis. However, the main entrance to the Hanwella School is on the long axis. In this way, the spatial experiences in the school embody the juxtaposition of the ordering systems found in Sinhalese, Portuguese, and Dutch buildings.

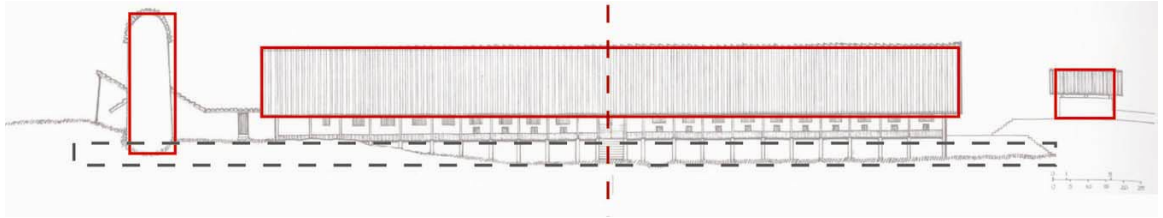


Figure 2.26: Diagram of the elevations of the dormitory (*based on Taylor, 1986*)

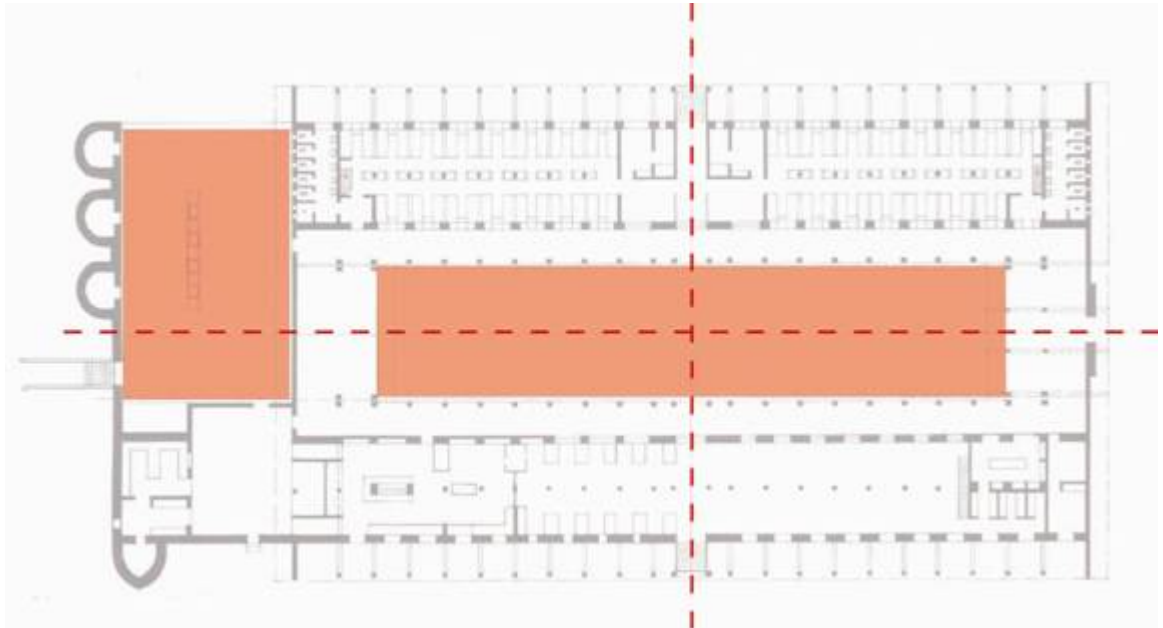


Figure 2.27: Diagram of the courtyard (*based on a plan in Taylor, 1986*)

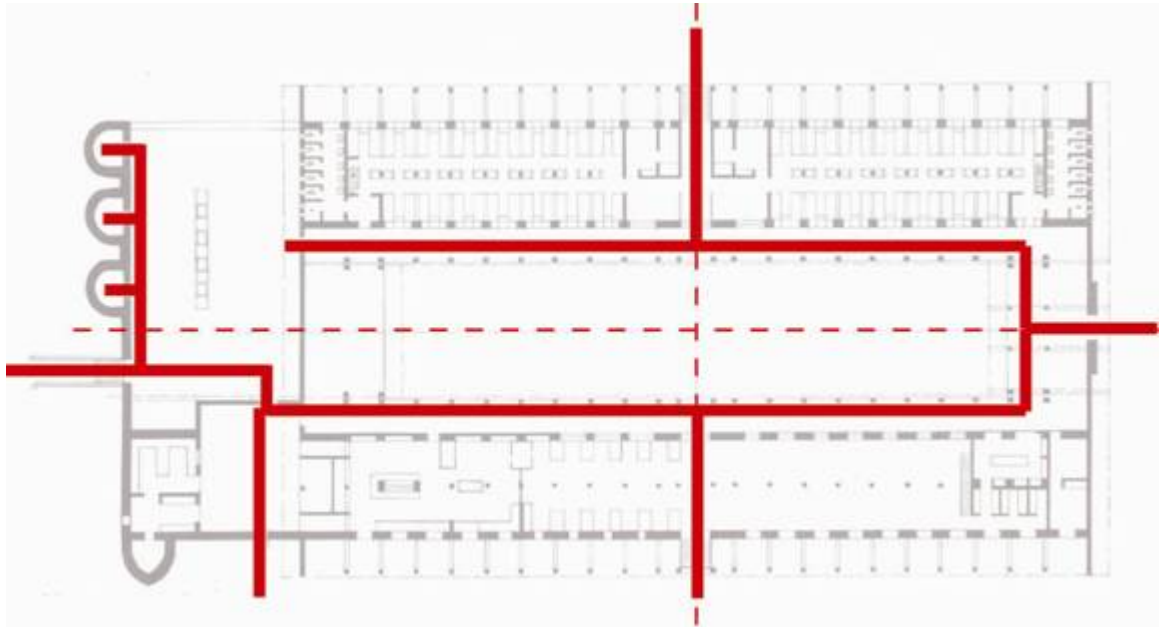


Figure 2.28: Diagram of the path (*based on a plan in Taylor, 1986*)

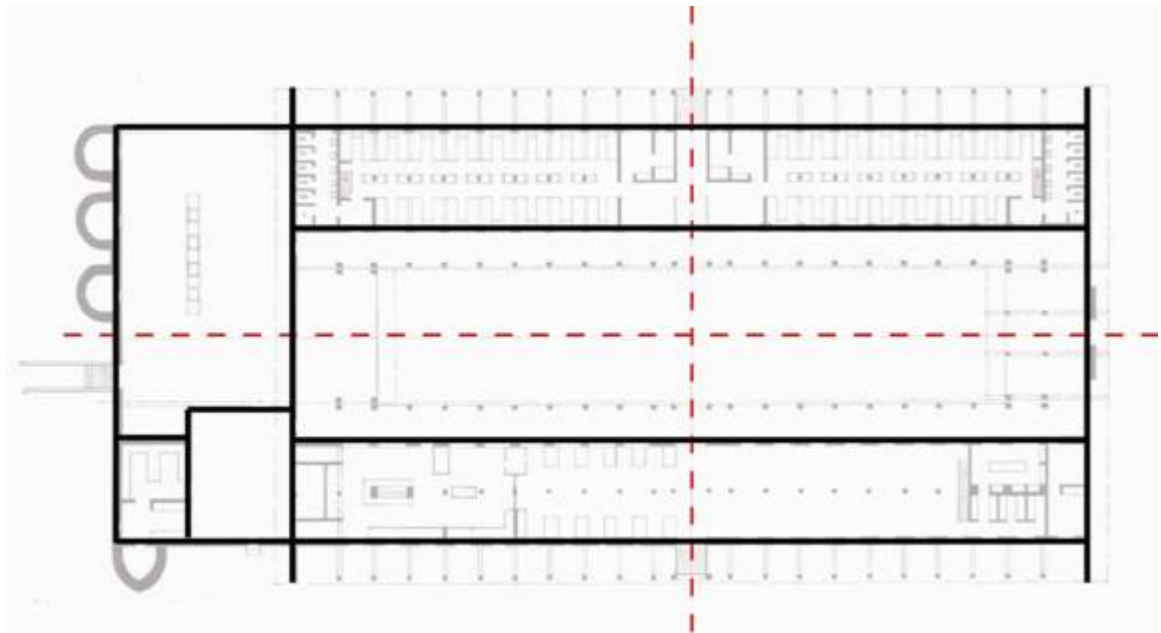


Figure 2.29: Diagram of the walls (*based on a plan in Taylor, 1986*)

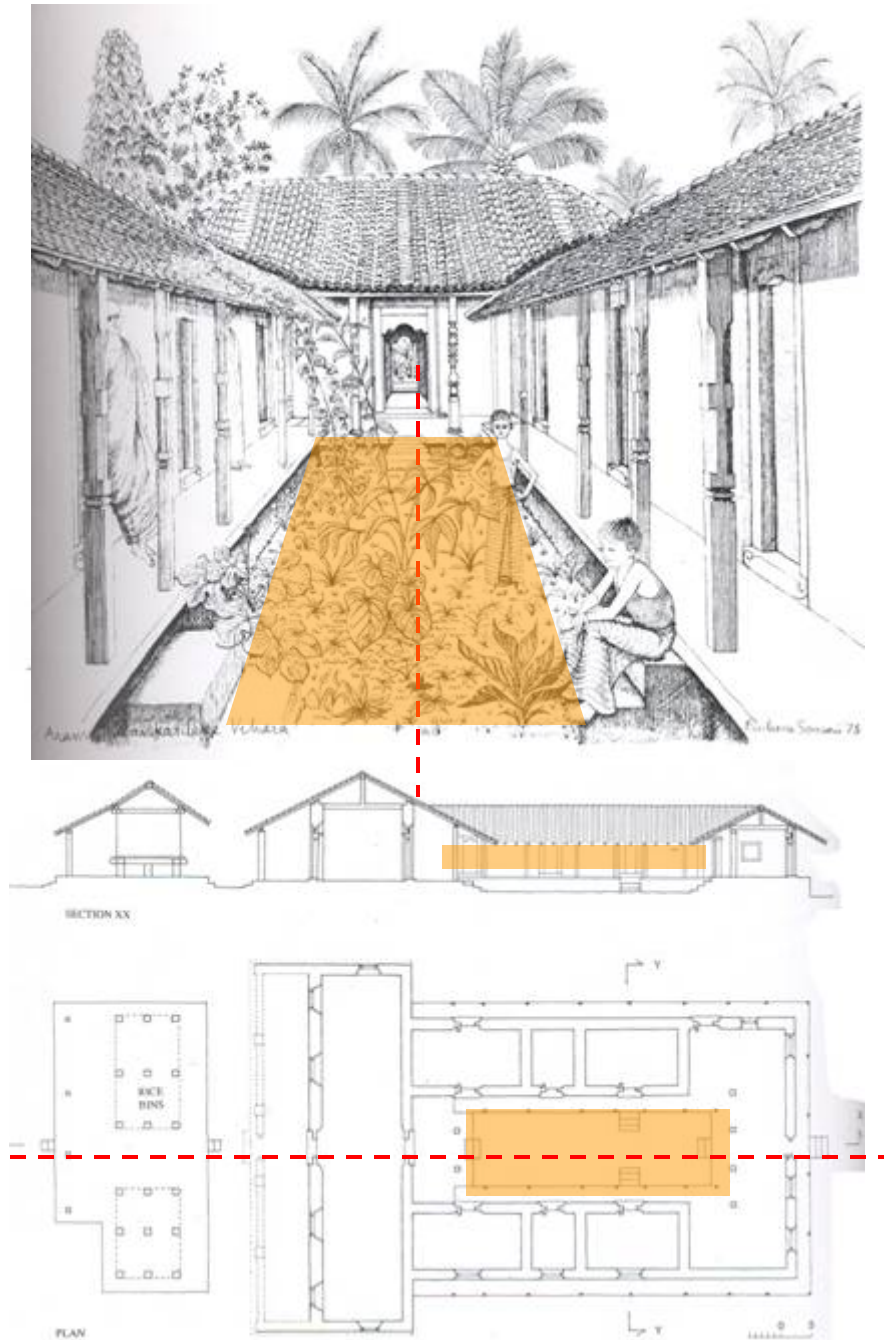


Figure 2.30: A Buddhist monk house; note the axial organization. However, the most interesting aspect that is maintained from this design is its perceptual and formal qualities (*Based on Lewcock, Sansoni, Senanayake, 1998*)

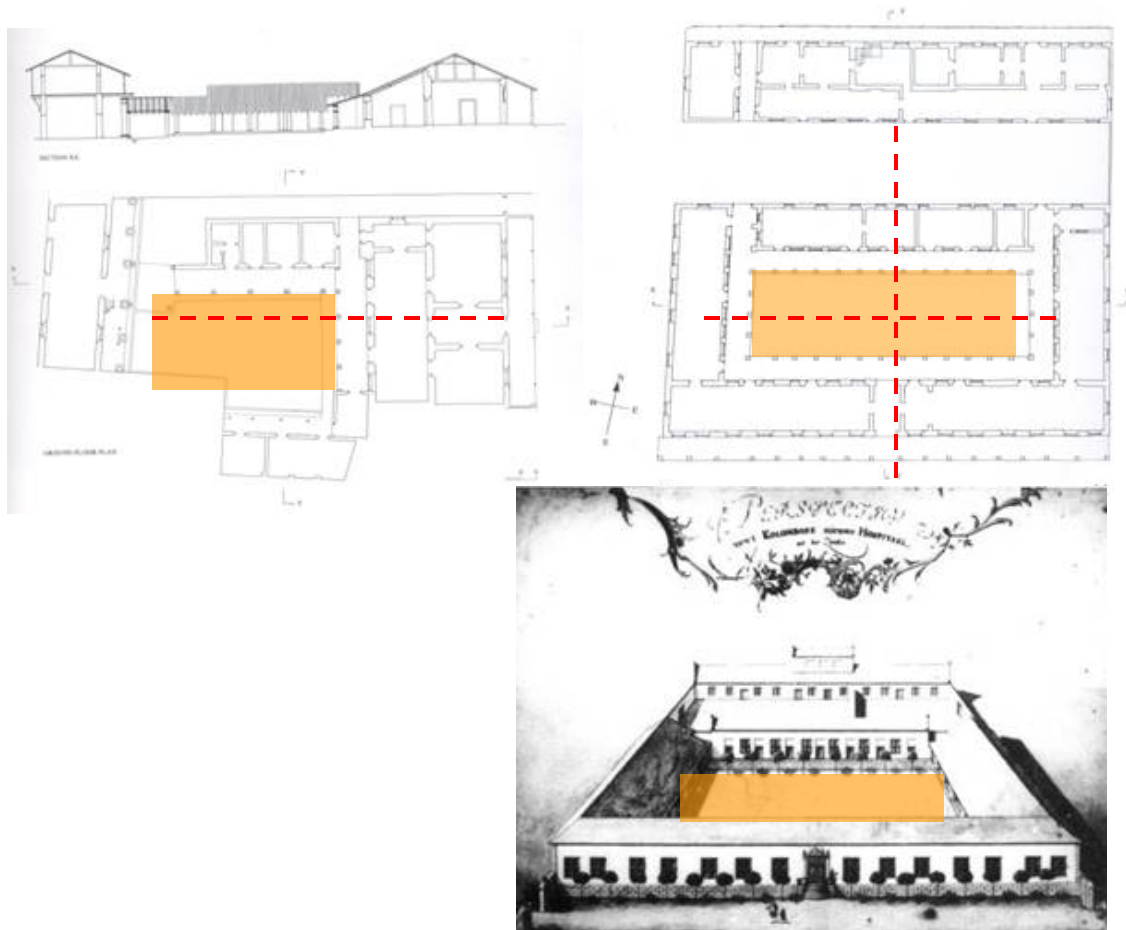


Figure 2.31: Dutch colonial architecture: a house and a hospital, with the axes in red dashed lines and the courtyards shaded (Based on Lewcock, Sansoni, Senanayake, 1998)

The service courtyard at the back is bordered by three semi-circular washing rooms placed one next to the other and topped with sloped roofs. Similarly, the bakery at the northwestern corner of the courtyard is a semi-circular tower with a tapered end. Next to the laundry area, the architects placed a water tower and a sickbay in a distinctive two-story cantilevered structure. The roundness of the washing rooms and the bakery stands in sharp contrast to the orthogonal structure next to them. This play of forms also highlights the distinction between the service and served areas. In addition, the sculptural forms in this area remind visitors of Portuguese villages (figure 2.32). The use of various courtyards and structures and the positioning of these features in the school reflect the ordering of the programs, indicating a clear classification of zones with functional areas based on the needs of the users (i.e., the nuns and the students) and the activities (i.e., education, living, support, and religious functions). The positioning of functional areas indicates a sense of hierarchy, indicated by the placement of the proposed church on the highest point. Bawa himself stated that “strictest economy controlled a wide range of buildings which are grouped over a large site.”¹⁷ The physical appearances of the various buildings also reveals this grouping of functions, in which each part is assigned a different expression, such as the long structures of the dormitory and school, the rounded structures of the laundry and bakery, and the staggered building for the water tower.



Figure 2.32: Portuguese villages (Source: *Arquitectura Popular em Portugal*, 1961)

2.3.2.3. Interior spaces

In the dormitory, the interior of the wings features a plan articulated by the modular structural system. Half walls delineate the periphery of each wing and their ceilings follow the form of the roofs, creating a sense of openness in them. The interior of the wings clearly expresses the structure of the roof. In contrast to the use of triangular trusses in Sinhalese or colonial buildings, Bawa and Plesner used columns that directly supported the ridge, with rafters arranged in a diagonal pattern. In this manner, the roofs appear to be two diagonal planes suspended from the vertical supports at the center, leads to a reading of the roof as an umbrella (figure 2.32). In addition, because Bawa chose to rotate the direction of the rafters from the traditional, orthogonal direction into diagonal bracing, he may have intended for the diagonal rafters to symbolize a woven plane, such as the textile or bamboo mats that are often used in vernacular buildings. Thus, in the interior space, Bawa seems to emphasize the autonomy of each plane, the floor, the walls, and the roofs, and to articulate three separate planes that define the space. Overall, the design highlights the role of the roof

planes as shelter and emphasizes the profile of the roof. However, this familiar shape of roofs is actually supported by a novel structural system.

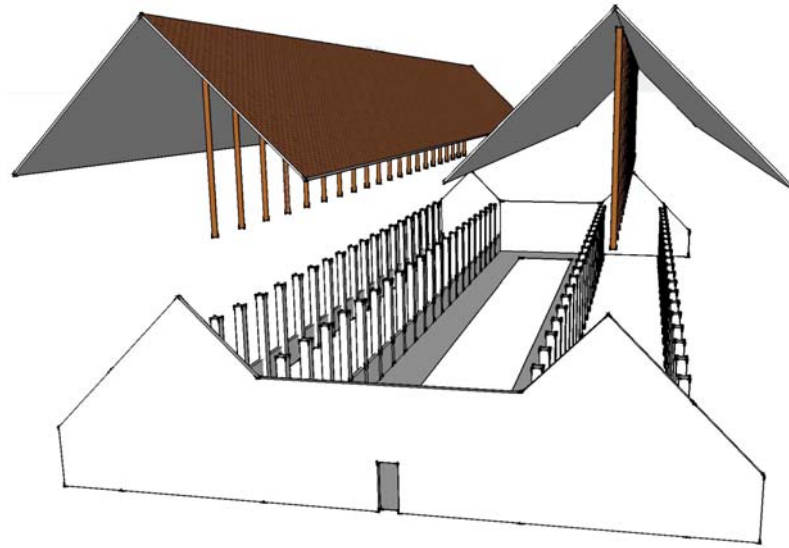


Figure 2.33: Diagram of the structural bays, wall-enclosure, and roof-umbrella

The use of columns on the periphery and those along the center of the structure relates to both the wall structures in colonial buildings and to the combination of wall and frame structures in Kandyan houses, and the use of thick walls at the perimeter and the repetitive windows allude to Portuguese colonial buildings. In addition, the tall ceilings and the design of the openings resemble the interior and the openings of colonial buildings, which responded well to the climatic conditions in the tropical area and thus provided a passive cooling system for the building. The use of wooden trellises on the openings allow for a continuous circulation of air. The materials used in the school are

also limited to common materials in the rural areas, such as clay tiles or straw for the roof, timber, and coconut trees. The round, timber columns, which are often not straight, lend a rustic ambience to which the building belongs. This choice reflects Bawa's preference for using found materials in his design, exemplified in used grinding stones as columns in the Ena de Silva House. However, the use of untreated timber for the columns lends to an ambiguous reading in which the columns become figurative elements inside the space. Stairs with a solid balustrade connect the mezzanines with the main floors, accentuating the simplicity of the interior. The treatment of the stairs as volumetric elements also lends to their reading as figurative elements in this otherwise large, open space (figure 2.33b).¹⁸

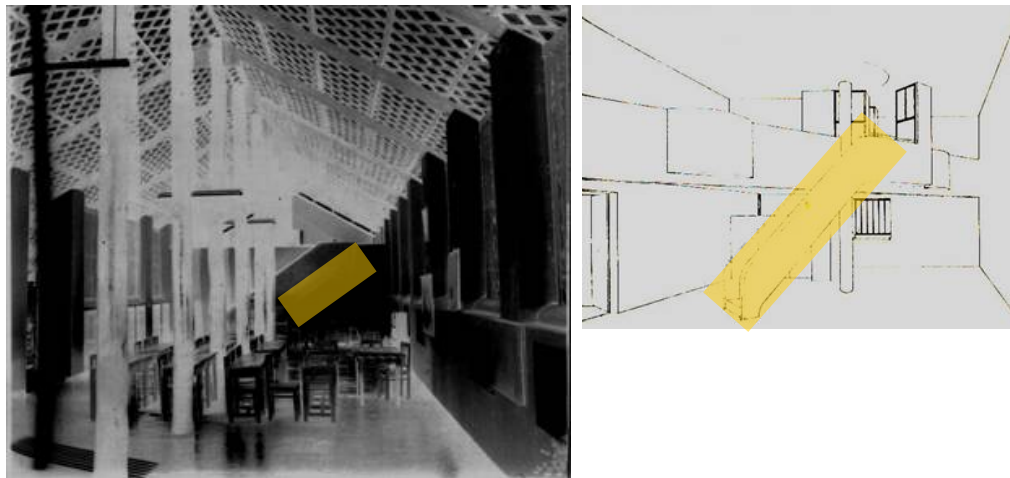


Figure 2.34: Interior Space: a. Diagram of the umbrella with the diagonal balustrade at the background (*based on Taylor, 1986*); b. a sketch for the Maison Citrohan (*Source: Le Corbusier, Toward a New Architecture*)

In the dormitory wing, the structural bays define the cells containing the sleeping accommodations (figure 2.34). Each cell has two bunks and built-in shelves on the half walls. It also has a small window that corresponds to the students' desks inside, providing light scoops to individual students.¹⁹ The sloped-lower edge of the light scoops prevents any object from being placed there. These details indicate a tendency to control the use of space and the desire to articulate architectural elements by preventing the presence of other objects such as furniture and appliances. In this way, the design emphasizes the functional aspect of spaces in which architectural elements such as platforms and vertical planes become functional. The structural expression, the openness, and the simplicity of the building may also reflect elements of contemporary architecture. The interior, with its mezzanine and the minimalist stairs, also suggest a broader source of reference. Other features in the design of this school, such as the courtyards and the use of trellised windows, exemplify the exploration of lessons learned from Sinhalese, Tamil, and colonial architecture in dealing with climatic requirements. Even the school hints of the built-environment in the small, rural areas of Portugal. The design revisits the notion of sequential experience, in which visitors enter a succession of clearly defined spaces, each of which articulates a unique experience.



Figure 2.35: Interior space with cells for students (yellow shade). Each cell contains built-in selves and bunks (blue shades) (left); Diagram of a window as a light scoop (right) (*based on a picture from AKAA archives, Archnet.org*)

2.3.3. The Heritance (Triton) Hotel (1979-81)

2.3.3.1. Background of the Heritance (Triton) Hotel

The Heritance Hotel (Triton Hotel) is located at Ahungalla, on the Indian Ocean side of the island about 50 miles to the south of Colombo, close the road to the old port town of Galle. The site of the hotel is a flat, elongated land that runs parallel to the sea, allowing for a full view of the Indian Ocean on its long beach frontage. The hotel contains around 160 rooms and includes amenities such as a swimming pool and a restaurant which conform to the standards of international tourists. It was expanded in the 1990s, when Bawa added some residential suites and another swimming pool. As a resort hotel, the brief obviously called for a design that articulated the beauty of the site and reflected a Sri Lankan context. Thus, the challenge for the architect seemed to be the manifestation of the notion of a Sri Lankan building while accommodating the features of a resort hotel.

Bawa, who received the commission for this hotel long after Ulrik Plesner had left the partnership, designed and constructed the hotel between 1979 and 1981 in the midst of political and economic changes on the island. The election of 1977 brought the United National Party back to power, ushering in a new direction in economic policy in which the new government dismantled the welfare system and moved to the free market economy in which private sectors were invited into the country previously controlled by a government that discouraged foreign investors. In other words, the late 1970s witnessed a fundamental change on the island that moved in the direction of an export-led economy and economic liberalization, including the dismantling of state-run enterprises in many sectors, including the tourism sector.²⁰ Thus, the hotel was designed in an effort to boost the tourism sector with the aim of courting mainly international visitors to the southern coast of the island of Sri Lanka. It was to be built, owned, and managed by the Aitken Spence Group, which operated several other resort hotels on the island. Currently, still under the same management, the hotel is known as the Heritance Ahungalla Hotel.

2.3.3.2. Site plan and plans

The long, narrow strip of the site of the hotel is connected to the major Colombo-Galle Road by a long, narrow, zigzagging passage. Bawa enclosed this corridor with high walls, modified by dense vegetation along its edge and a row of palm trees. Toward the end of the route, the corridor turns into a space of considerable size, in the middle of which a large, elongated pool with rows of palm trees resides. In placing the building on the site, Bawa treated the hotel as a series of long masses that acted as a barrier between the land and the sea, responding to the long ocean frontage. However, in effect, the placing of the hotel divides the site into two distinct parts: the front part, which contains service areas and public functions—the corridor, the lobby, and the forecourt,

and the back part, which contains the guest zone with all its amenities. Indeed, the long, linear back zone, which runs parallel to the ocean, turns the beach side of the lot into a private garden for the patrons. In a way, this strategy for the site plan seems to resemble the basic arrangement of a colonial manor house, in which the mass of the building acted as a boundary that shielded the private courtyard at the back. The ordering of the programmatic elements clearly demarcates the public area of the hotel, the guest wings, and the service area.

In the site plan, Bawa seems to set out the major axes that govern the basic arrangement of the hotel, a transverse axis that organizes the relationship of the two parts of the site—the elongated corridor and the ocean frontage lot—and a longitudinal axis that governs the main masses of the hotel (figure 2.35). However, the offset placement of the wings counters the sense of a strict symmetry suggested by these axes. In each U-shaped wing, the arrangement suggests a presence of a local, secondary transversal axis that governs the organization of each wing. Again, on such a local level, the shifting masses and the changes in the building sizes transform the apparent symmetry suggested by the presence of the local axes. Bawa's practice was to use axes to unify the overall plan without resorting to a mirror image with identical left and right sides, employing instead a dynamic symmetry. The primary strategy of the hotel appears to lie in the architect's concerns that the massing of the design should fit the site, that the organization of activities should be clarified, and that the character of the hotel as a seaside resort should be emphasized.

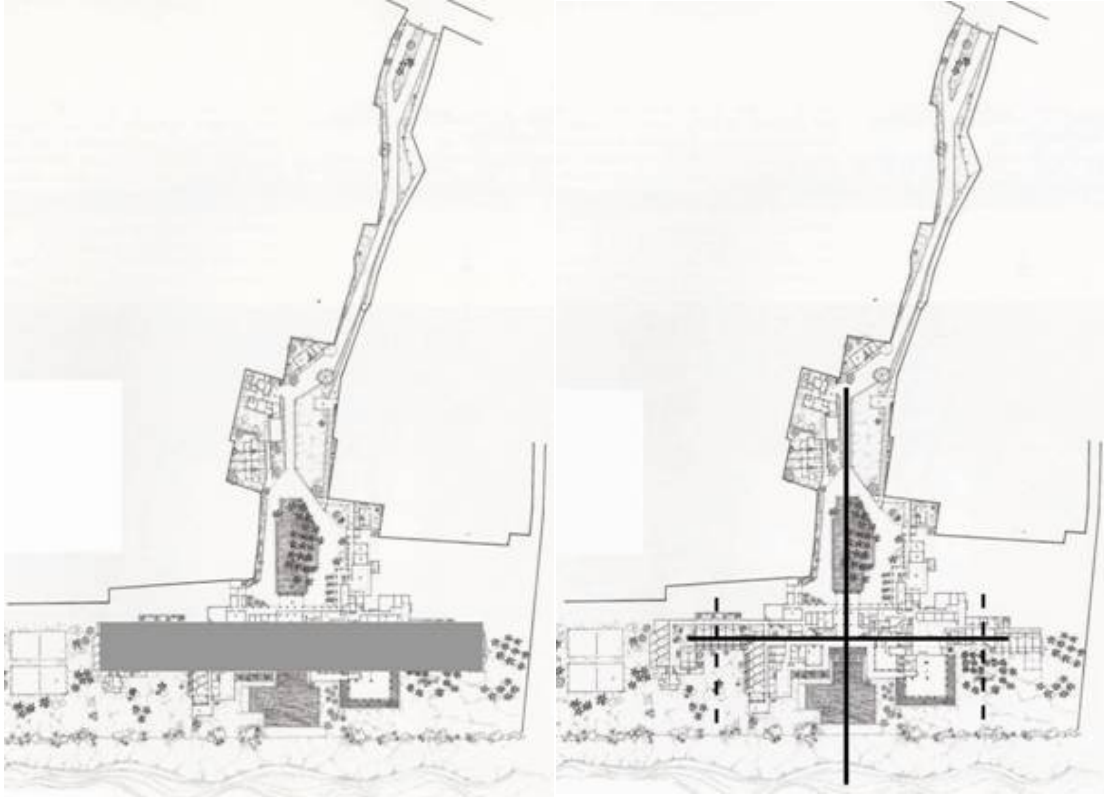


Figure 2.36: (a) Diagram of the masses; (b) Diagram of the axes (*after Taylor, 1986*)

2.3 3.3 Experiences in the Heritance Hotel

On approaching the hotel, the zigzagging path to the hotel provides a series of changing planes of vision, with glimpses of tall vegetation offered behind the wall that stimulates a sense of a tropical hideaway. Furthermore, when visitors approach the end of the corridor and enter the large space, they face the façade of the hotel, in which a focal opening at the center on the ground level proffers a tantalizing view of the Indian Ocean beyond (figure 2.36). In addition, the arrangement of the path forces visitors to see the façade of the hotel in a rotation, emphasizing the three-dimensional quality of the hotel and the arrangement of the roofs (figure 2.37). In this way, with this large space around the shallow pool, Bawa created a large forecourt, an outdoor lobby that connects the main mass of the hotel and the approaching space. Indeed, the rows of palm trees lining the pool seem to replicate the colonnaded hall of the lobby, thus reinforcing the impression of an outdoor lobby. In a poetic sense, the architect treated the approaching route as a processional path that culminates in the threshold between the land and the sea. Crossing the lobby, visitors find a large pool at the center of the back courtyard with a backdrop of the Indian Ocean (figure 2.38).²¹ The guest wings, viewed in an oblique way, line the back courtyard. Such an organization of the entrance court, followed by the lobby of the hotel, and ending with the large pool opening to the sea, indeed, creates a sequence of spaces that articulate changing contrasts between the expansion and compression of space, heightened by a sequence of enclosed and expanded views. In fact, such a strategy reflects the way Bawa explained the entrance court to his garden at Lunuganga.²²



Figure 2.37: Diagram of the sliding focal point (*based on plan in Taylor, 1986*) and the panoramic view of the lobby

The most significant formal characteristic of the hotel is obviously the preeminence of the cascading roofs that are clad with Portuguese half-round clay tiles (figure 2.37). Broad eaves help to enhance the impression of cascaded roofs. These broad eaves also reveal the structure of the roofs that exposes rows of wooden rafters, painted in white, that support the clay tiles. The roofs themselves seem to be strongly articulated as floating shelters above the building. The way in which visitors moving inside the Heritance Hotel view the roofs, by looking up at the wide eaves with sets of rafters, trusses, purlins, and wooden sheets underneath the tiles, heightens the sense of a shelter and the tectonic of the roof. The design strategy for the roofs underscores the importance of the profiles of the roofs and the skyline that they create.



Figure 2.38: Cascaded roofs.



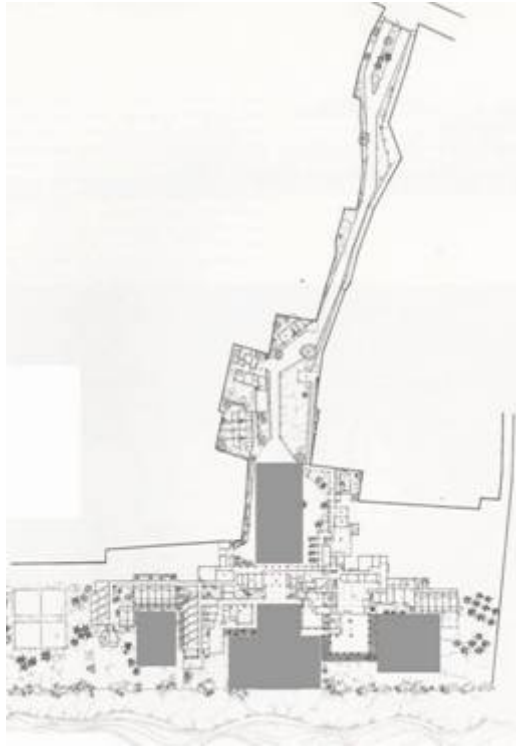
Figure 2 39: The pool and the lobby.

Using this strategy of creating a sequence of motions that foreground the characteristics of the site, Bawa integrated the movement through the hotel in a holistic way that enhanced the expression of the hotel. In addition, the gradual transformation of the space, the avoidance of direct views, the emphasis on a series of changing views, and the circular motion at the end of route, which reveals the character of the building and at the same time affords a view to the most distinctive feature of the site, the sea, all set the tone for a unique visual experience. Indeed, that the forecourt is in effect a courtyard, hints at an element that features prominently as the organizational theme of the Heritage Hotel. The sequence of spaces in this hotel is essentially a sequence of courtyards, creating a continuous open space that permeates through the hotel. Each guest room also faces the major courtyards, creating a strong sense of a private courtyard. The lobby of the hotel, characterized by rows of columns, evokes the sense

of the deep verandah of a colonial mansion. Bawa has also created on each level of the hotel an intimate connection between the colonnaded verandah and the courtyard garden of a characteristic house in Sri Lanka. For example, in one of the minor courtyard; Bawa creates a stepped courtyard that is densely planted with tropical vegetation, resembling a hanging garden (figure 2.39). One of the elevator courtyards is defined by tall, whitewashed walls punctuated by small, rectangular windows on two sides and multi-story colonnades on the other two sides. This strategy could have characterized his response to the multi-story enclosure of the courtyard, always maintaining a close, intimate connection to open space. These courtyards seem to evoke the experience of passing through a colonnaded passage in a wing of a colonial house (figure 2.40). Bawa individualized each local courtyard by assigned each a set of particular characteristics.



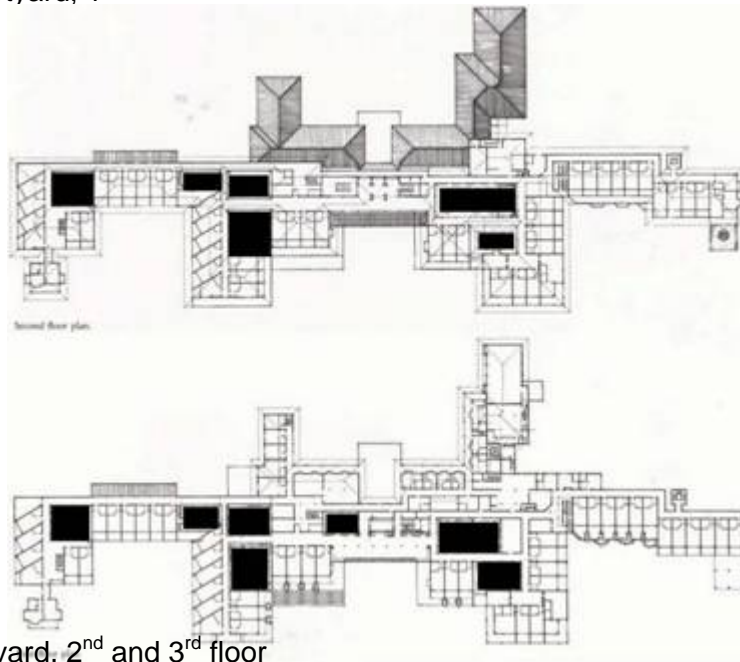
Figure 2.40: The stepped courtyard



Major courtyard, 1st



Minor courtyard, 2nd



Minor courtyard, 2nd and 3rd floor

Figure 2.41: Diagrams of the major and minor courtyards (*based on a plan in Taylor, 1986*)

The design of the hotel demonstrates two ways in which Bawa used the courtyards: large courtyards were used as organizing devices and smaller courtyards as a means to stimulate the experiences of visitors and the memories of Portuguese mansions. On the global level, the chains of courtyards provide an overall sense of a connection between the masses and open spaces and the relationship between the building and the site. On the local level, the micro-scale arrangement provides various experiences within a space, such as colonnaded paths that define the open space and that evoke the connection between spaces in local and colonial architecture in Sri Lanka. More importantly, the local courtyards act as devices to choreograph the views as visitors explore the hotel. Bawa created openings in the masses to allow a view to the sea, connecting the local context, the corridor, and the small courtyards to the global context, the Indian Ocean. Indeed, the lobby sets the tone for the foregrounding of the pictorial quality of the design. The pool in the center court eliminates the distance between the lobby and the ocean, merging the foreground, the lobby, and the background with the ocean. This strategy emphasizes the flatness of the site. However, the flat landscape is carefully clipped, creating an infinite spatial extension. In Bawa words, "Everything is at the same level: if the world were only flat you'd see Africa on the horizon." ²³

One of the distinctive features in the lobby and pool is the presence of a rugged fishing boat at the center of the pool. On a subtler level, this composition creates a strong contrast between the buildings, designed on the basis of a simple, orthogonal geometry, perfectly executed with subtle coloring and the prominence of the walls, and the roundness of the boat with its rugged texture. The boat acts as an ordinary object placed in a well-prepared setting. It acts in the manner of a found object, modifying the space, connecting the building to the ordinary, and evoking a seaside fishing village

setting. The boat also strengthens the play of references to the locality, which Bawa employs in the formal expression of the building through the use of the shape of the roofs and the prominence of walls throughout the hotel.²⁴ Such an object also brings the contemplation of the temporal aspect, in which an object, the boat, representing the past, and the setting, representing the present, are juxtaposed.

Lining many of the walls in the Triton Hotel are the colonnades, which, in fact, foreground the structural system employed in the hotel (figure 2.41). Such a strategy brings to mind the frame system widely used in the architecture of the Sinhalese and the Tamils. The exposed structure demonstrates the way in which the construction of the hotel takes its precedent from common building practice on the island. Bawa seems to once again allude to the way in which the courtyards in colonial mansions are enclosed by colonnades. However, in colonial buildings with multi-story colonnades, masonry columns at the ground level assume a heavier and more massive character compared to wooden columns on the second floor. In some cases, the lower columns are based on a rectangular shape, while the upper parts are cylindrical. In the Heritance Hotel, the columns are stripped to the simplest form, a bare cylindrical column with fretted capitals (figure 2.42). The colonnades also forgo the heaviness of the masonry piers of colonial colonnades, and instead, remain slim in appearance.



Figure 2.42: Lobby with columns and exposed beams



Figure 2.43: Columns

The front façade of the hotel is stucco walls with repetitive, tall, rectangular windows on the ground floor (figure 2.43). The windows are double sash windows with multi panes on the upper part and side-hung, louvered wooden panels on the bottom part. Such a motif seems to deliberately be reminiscent of a typical window in Dutch Colonial houses of the eighteenth century, characterized by a double part window with side-hung panels at the bottom (figure 2.43).²⁵ However, any reference to Dutch windows is limited to this partition. The treatment of the openings does not include the use of thick frames around the windows, as the Dutch did in the past. The strategy of outlining the openings on the walls by framing these windows is repeated throughout the hotel, seeming to hint at the treatment of openings in colonial houses referred to above, in which doors and windows were defined by thick wooden frames. Thus, the design reflects the practice of articulating the sense of a rhythmic opening while avoiding a direct recreation of the frames and openings of colonial houses. This treatment of the plane of walls in a way conjured up an experience of passing along the galleries of a colonial house in which the walls were perforated with rows of windows strung from side to side underneath the broad eaves.



Figure 2.44: A window in Triton (right) and diagrams of typical windows of Dutch colonial houses; the frames are in darker shades (*Source for diagrams: sketches, Lewcock, Sansoni, Senanayake, 1998*)



Figure 2.45: Windows overlooking the courtyard

2.4. Characteristics of the Works of Geoffrey Bawa

The three cases illustrate Bawa's approach to architecture which shows a different attitude from his contemporaries in Sri Lanka. Minette de Silva and Valentine Gunasekara were two other Sri Lanka architects who were educated in the Architectural Association School of Architecture and then set up architectural practices in the island. Their works in the 1950's and 1960's demonstrated efforts to problematize modern architecture in the island. However, their houses and public facilities exemplified design approaches that were rooted in the international style in the tendency to turn to geometric abstractionism and in the use of materials such as concrete and elements such as *brise-soleil* (figure 2.45, 2.46). It is not the aim of this chapter to compare and contrast the architecture of Geoffrey Bawa with those of his two contemporaries. Instead, this part intends to paint a picture of tendencies in architecture in the island as Bawa embarked on his career.

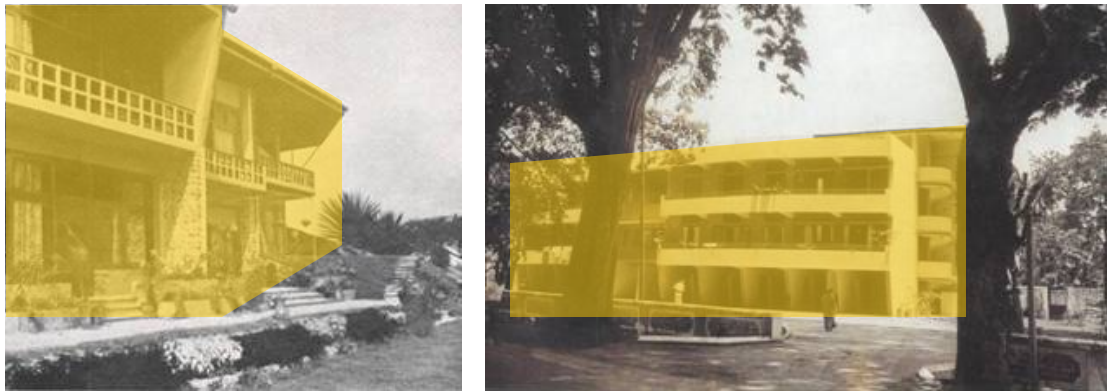


Figure 2. 46: Examples of architecture of Minette de Silva: a house in Kandy, 1953 (left) and Senanayake Flat, Colombo, 1957 (right) (Source: de Silva, 1998)



Figure 2. 47: An example of architecture of Valentine Gunasekara, Tangalle Bay Hotel, 1969-72. Note the emphasis on the basic geometric form. (Source: *Pieris, 2007, originally from Library, Associated Newspapers Ceylon, Ltd.*)

The pictures give a glimpse on a different path that Bawa took in his design. In the three study cases above, the strongest impression that Bawa's architecture creates is the sense of familiarity that it instills in its observers through features that tap into the past and present built environments on the island.²⁶ These features, among others, include the use of courtyards, the shapes of the roofs, the use of building materials, and various details found inside the house. However, as the discussions about the three study cases have shown, Bawa did not simply imitate such features and incorporate them in his buildings but instead created a new architecture incorporating such features but still maintaining a uniqueness that rendered his work distinctive from their references. In a way, the use of historical elements alludes to the idea of memory. However, memories alluded in the design is not a personal memory of the architect or the viewers, but a cultural memory. In this line of thought, the understanding of cultural memory is a collective memory that is intentionally created. This strategy gives a hint of a modernist outlook in Bawa's architecture. Modernity allows one to construct his or her own identity

by looking back to the pasts that may seemingly unrelated and forge a new connection. An example of a practice that could only happen with the advent of modernity is the notion of nationalism as a constructed identity, in which a sense of identity of a nation includes a deliberate construction of the narrative of history to bolster the sense of belonging.

2.4.1. Site Plan

Bawa's architecture shows that he treats each project as a distinctive case. The Ena de Silva house created a walled enclave or an oasis in the midst of the city. On the other hand, the Hanwella School was a sprawling complex on top of a hill in the rural Kandyan area. The Heritage hotel was designed as if it was a Portuguese mansion. Each of Bawa's design is different from his other works. His oeuvre demonstrates that he did not repeat the same approach over and over again. Instead, his designs are based on a careful engagement of the site and on considerations of the building program. Each site demands different responses and each of his designs is an immediate response to that challenge. Thus, the Hanwella School celebrated the view to the surrounding hillside and to the plantation while the Heritage Hotel articulated its location as threshold between the island and the Indian Ocean. When the site offered little in terms of natural features, such the house in Colombo, Bawa created its own connection to nature by creating a garden that opened to the sky. Merged with the needs as expressed in the program, Bawa designs buildings that foreground appropriateness to the site. These cases showed that Bawa approached every project as a different problem, which underlines that the way he designs a building is essentially based on modern sensibility to the site and the program. However, the distinctiveness lies in his ability in applying this way of designing with the use of elements that exist in Sri Lanka, both traditional and colonial.

In this way, Bawa's oeuvre demonstrated his strong concern with the site as the underlying theme. For example, on the Subodhi Institute for Integral Education in Piliyandela (figure 2.47), Bawa designed the facility around the choreography of covered passageways that followed the contour of the land of a former rubber plantation that bordered Bolgoda Lake.²⁷ They allow visitors to see the various distinctive focal points, both in the surrounding landscape and on various buildings on the campus, arranged as a series of vistas. Indeed, the incorporations of visual glimpses of the site reflect Bawa's attempts to relate his buildings to the site, as evidenced in the following statement:

In my approach to architecture I think my first concern is the arrangement of space. How this relates to the site and the needs of the moment within whatever constraint there are.²⁸

In relation to the site, the passageways serve both as circulation paths and as orchestrating the movements of the users of the building in his design. In Bawa's own words,

Movement is very important. As you move through a building you are conscious of everything around you—although you may naturally see it in detail ... the rooms are merely about orchestrating one's movement, determining how people move through space, because that really is what one does. Arrival being drawn in, discovering, being released to the view. The inter-linked spaces are backdrops to life. It is not a singular devotion to a beautiful view. There is a more intrinsic energy that goes on within the spaces whether sheltered or not.²⁹

The architect elevated the act of movement by satiating it with experiential qualities of the site in which buildings were meant to be experienced through movement. This point underlines his unique approach to modernism. His approach is essentially a creation of an architectural promenade. However, his concerns with movements, arrangement of

spaces, and experience are married with the use of local elements, with the aim of creating a unity.



Figure 2.48: Subodhi Institute for Integral Education, Piliyandela. Covered passageways connect individual buildings that house training facilities, communal buildings, and dormitories.

The incorporation of the views of the surroundings implies the use of the technique of borrowing landscape, a technique that strongly articulates Bawa's lifelong passion and interest in the essence of gardens. Indeed, Bawa stated, that he "like human intervention,...like in a landscape when people contrive to mould it to the moods."³⁰ The design, indeed, recalls a strategy that Bawa employed in his garden in Lunuganga (See figure 2.1).³¹ Acquired as a former rubber plantation, Bawa transformed it into a magnificent informal garden for more than four decades.³² As an illustration, from the front porch of the main house, visitors can capture a view to a

faraway focal point, a stupa across the river, marked by a tree and a cow, with a giant Chinese vase in the middle, cutting the field of view and merging the foreground and the background. Ulrik Plesner has described Bawa's strategy for Lunuganga in the following quote:

By placing a big old Portuguese jar under an old tree in the middle distance, several square kilometers of lagoon and jungle and even the temple itself have been drawn into the garden. It is strange how one can civilize a whole landscape with a single pot.³³

Anjalendran also commented on this strategy, claiming that by manipulating the site to achieve an effect, Bawa showed his sensitivity to the scale of the human body:

In his garden, a dagoba on a hillock across a lagoon 3 kms. away is drawn into vision by placing of a Chinese clay pot beneath a tree in the mid-distance lawn. (Plesner describes this as the civilization of landscape, and I also think Plesner's article, though slightly exaggerated captures the mood of Geoffrey as a person and architect.) This contrived effect, yet casual and subtle best exemplifies Geoffrey's approach and ideal in Architecture.³⁴

Bawa himself has described his strategy in designing Lunuganga of cutting the visual field:

Over the years mowing through the garden as it grew, one saw potential of various areas which had inherently different atmospheres. For instances, the long view to the south ended with the temple, but in the middle distance was a ridge with a splendid ancient moonamal tree and when I placed a large Chinese jar under it, the hand of man was established in this middle distance. Now the eye stops here, travels to the glimmer of the lake beyond, to the slope across a long stretch of rice fields and to the stupa on the crown of the far hill across the lake. In this view the vision of the lake was too slight to be effective and it became obvious that a part of the ridge needed to be lowered a few feet to make this whole composition establish itself with a total finality which has not changed and now looks as if it had been there since the beginning of time.³⁵

Through the use of repetitive elements, such as columns and openings in the walls and the juxtaposition of near and far views, the passage along these courtyards offers a variety of depth. As the architect stated:

For myself a building can only be understood by moving around and through it and by experiencing the modulation and the feel of the spaces one moves through—from the outside into verandahs, then rooms, passages, courtyards—the view from these spaces into others, views through the landscape beyond, and from outside the building, views back through rooms into inner rooms and courts.³⁶

Further, he mentioned that

Not so much rooms in rooms, but rooms in their context and seeing things beyond a particular room or space, even as we are sitting here you can imagine how the place will change. One's feelings in a room constantly alter as one moves around it—particularly the perception of outside and adjacent spaces. What I mean is that when you design anything—say that end wall there—you have to consider seeing through it, past it, around it from all different points of view. The landscape is a moving picture that one is inside of. It is a continuum in which all sides appear simultaneously.³⁷

In this line of thought, Bawa reiterated his premium on the experience:

In each project one finds that one's thinking is unconfined. With the particular needs of the building at the back of one's mind one sees the solution as a totality—the site being all important—and one sees whatever vision is granted to one as a building set in its surroundings—the building seen from outside, the movement in the building, the whole picture one tries to see whatever anyone using the building would also see and feel. In short, the totality of appearance and movement in and out of the buildings.³⁸

The use of courtyards also reveals Bawa's orientation to the exterior, an approach which finds its root in Bawa's experiment with his own estate is Lunuganga.³⁹ It also seems that the architect places a premium on creating outdoor spaces with the qualities of indoor spaces.

2.4.2. Spatial Arrangement

Nevertheless, Bawa's efforts to fit his building into the site worked well through his choices in the spatial and formal arrangement. If there is continuity in Bawa's architecture, the appearance of courtyards in his design in Sri Lanka provides the clue. The primacy of the courtyard is a distinctive feature in the architecture of Sri Lanka, ranging from the houses of the Buddhist Sinhalese to the colonial houses of the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the British (figure 2.54). In the extensive exploration of Sri Lankan architecture, Romald Lewcock, Barbara Sansoni, and Laki Senanayake have shown the characteristics of the houses of different periods in Sri Lanka.⁴⁰ The manor houses of the Sinhalese, the *walauwe*, are commonly arranged around one or several internal courtyards. Within internal verandahs surround the courtyard, daily activities take place. However, reflecting Buddhist beliefs, the courtyards in Sinhalese manor houses lack the notion of hierarchy. The openness of the living areas surrounding the courtyard shapes the experiential qualities of these manor houses. By contrast, the houses of the Hindu Tamils in Sri Lanka, although similarly arranged around internal courtyards, feature a strong sense of hierarchy. Houses of the Arabs, the Portuguese, and the Dutch in Sri Lanka also feature courtyards as a prominent feature. The Colonial houses of the Portuguese, often characterized by a large, open verandah facing a rear garden, sometimes incorporate a service wing that projects out at right angles at the rear, thus creating a large courtyard at the back defined by the L-shaped house. Dutch houses feature a more distinctive courtyard that is more formalized and aligned to the axis with a strong sense of symmetry. This axis is further articulated in the form of a hallway leading from the reception room in the front to the living quarters in the back, ending in a very wide verandah that faces the courtyard in the back. Thus, the main circulation path of the Dutch house is superimposed on the axis. Furthermore, the main living area in a Dutch colonial house is the deep back verandah that faces the inner courtyard.

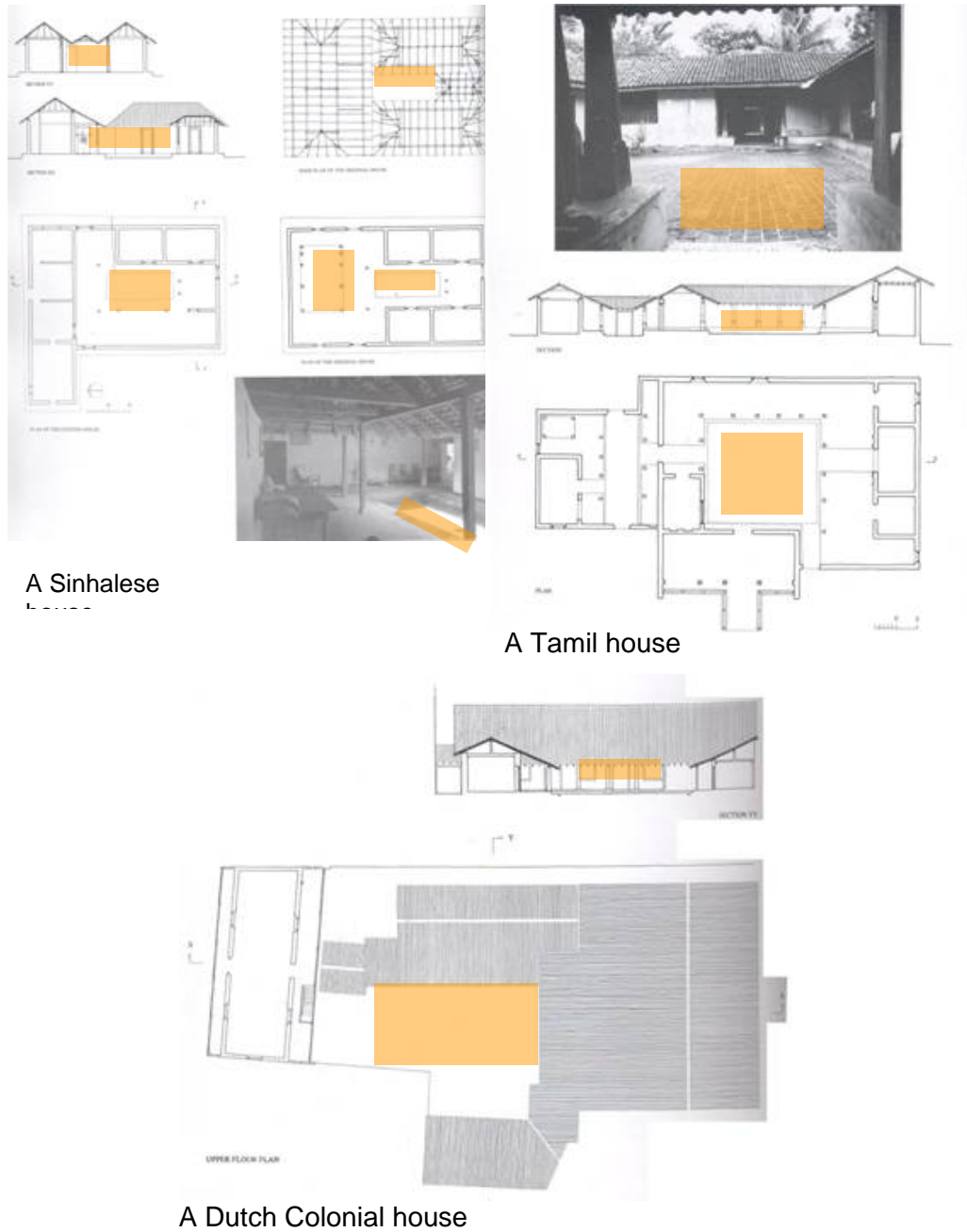


Figure 2.49: Various plans of Sri Lankan houses highlighting the courtyard (*Based on Lewcock, Sansoni, and Senanayake: 1998*)

Throughout his career, Bawa experimented with spatial arrangements based on the play between a series of courtyards in subsequent projects. In one of his first significant major buildings, the Bentota Beach Hotel (figure 2.49), Bawa arranged the hotel on the basis of an organization of a large rectangular courtyard.⁴¹ At the same time as he working on the up-scale Bentota Beach hotel, Bawa and the ER&B firm also worked on a budget hotel located next to the Bentota Beach Hotel, that is, the Serendib Hotel (figure 2.50).⁴² He also organized this hotel around a series of courtyards, but as a series of long, narrow spaces. The overall arrangement of the Serendib Hotel created a layering of spaces, proceeding from the street, passing through a reception area to a thin inner courtyard, leading to the lobby, penetrating the main mass of the hotel before stopping at the beach front. In this way, on a smaller scale, the hotel evoked the experience in the elongated courtyard spaces of Dutch colonial houses with its multi-story colonnaded veranda lining the courtyard. These hotels provide evidence of Bawa's exploration of elements that define the courtyard—the colonnaded path or the colonnaded verandah—and the relationship between the interior rooms and the exterior courtyard. The use of the courtyard seems to be fundamental in the architecture of the island, and Bawa's oeuvre reveals consideration experimentation with various shapes and configurations of courtyards. However, such experiments demonstrate that Bawa did not follow a specific pattern when he designed the organization of his courtyards. Instead, he seemed to be more interested in the idea of creating an open space bounded by rooms and maintaining the perceptual and experiential qualities of such a space. Sri Lankan architecture incorporates the basic design notion of an open space surrounded by room with wide verandahs as a transition space. Bawa treated this element as a basic idea that governed his approach to the spatial order of his architecture in plans and sections of his buildings.



Figure 2.50: Central courtyard of the Bentota Beach Hotel.

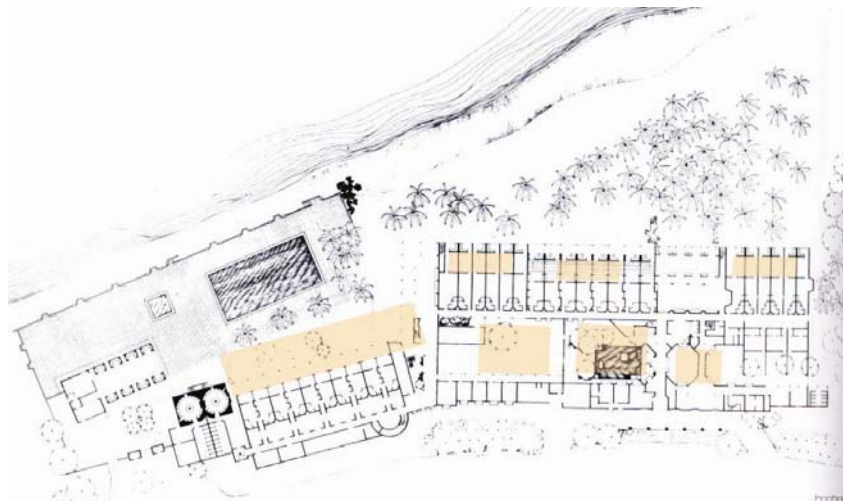


Figure 2.51: Serendib Hotel, the shaded areas are the elongated courtyards
(Based on Robson, 2002)

This understanding of the courtyard in Bawa's architecture is based on the distinctions between type and model in the work of Quatremere de Quincy. De Quincy has argued that

the word "type" presents less the image of a thing to copy or imitate completely than the idea of an element which ought itself to serve as a rule for the model. ... The model, as understood in the practical execution of the art, is an object that should be repeated as it is; the type, on the contrary, is an object after which each [artist] can conceive works of art that may have no resemblance. All is precise and given in the model; all is more or less vague in the type.⁴³

Giulio Carlo Argan reiterated de Quincy's theory that the notion of type was based on generalization, a set of deductions based on observations on a collection of examples over time, and hence historical.⁴⁴ Argan particularly articulated de Quincy's notion that type was a schema that allowed for a variation of forms. He further stressed that the notion of typology of function did not appear until the second half of the nineteenth century. Anthony Vidler also discussed the development notion of typology in the academic tradition, pointing out to two strains in the understanding of typology: typology as a reference to primary forms and typology as a generative principle.⁴⁵ Bawa's use of the courtyard as an organizing scheme in his architecture conforms to the notion of a typology of form, not a typology of function. Argan also believed that de Quincy's formulation of the idea of type was the foundation for the process of simplification and the generalization of a set of examples.

The use of typology points to the act of distilling design ideas derived from examples familiar to observers. Bawa approached the courtyard as a set of ideas, and thus a type rather than a model to be faithfully reproduced. The notion of typology points to Bawa's strategy to borrow typological elements from the Dutch, Portuguese, and Sinhalese architecture in the island.⁴⁶ However, he does not turn to these typological elements as an abstraction or a conceptual device, but instead he uses them as

concrete typological elements. In other words, his use of these typological elements is physical and experiential. The courtyard type allows Bawa to set up a framework for a synchronic experience in his buildings, in which his architecture referred to multiple ordering systems such as the formal courtyard order in colonial buildings and a hierarchical order in the Buddhist Sinhalese houses, without elevating any one of them. Further, Bawa seems to have insisted on bringing the idea of the courtyard to the level of experience through his careful attention to the scale, the details of the buildings, the way these courtyards are connected to each other, and the way these courtyards are approached. In relation to the notion of experience, the courtyards are usually lined with colonnaded verandah and filled with dense vegetation, the presence of which evokes an experience one might have in the courtyards of Sri Lankan houses. Indeed, vegetations provide a sense of scale and proportion to the building and amplify vertical elements.⁴⁷ Bawa tended to place palm trees in the courtyards, echoing the colonnades surrounding them. Along the corridor and in some of the courtyards, Bawa placed vegetation up against the wall, which in effect, created a sense of wallpaper. Anjalendran, in a criticism of Bawa's architecture, stated that without the vegetation, it would be bland.⁴⁸ However, it seems that the presence of vegetation is exactly a calculated approach on the part of Bawa, who intended the vegetation to become inseparable from the structure.⁴⁹ The attention of details, scale, and proportion demonstrates his modernist sensibilities in treating the typological elements; questioning possibilities instead of following them as a rule as in traditional approaches. His designs foreground the attempts to problematize the way a courtyard would be experienced.

The use of the courtyard seems to have been a basic building block upon which the architect organized the synchronic experiences in his buildings and broke up human experiences inside his building into multiple, sequential experiences. Bawa emphasized

the clarity of each courtyard through the use of the strong symmetry, axuality, and geometry at the local level. In organizing movement into and inside the hotel, Bawa avoided any direct, straight passage, orchestrating instead a series of twists and turns that reveals a succession of changing vistas. A hint of Bawa's strategy in the basic arrangement of the plan with its play of axes and sequences of spaces and views can be found in one of his earlier buildings, an office building for the Edward, Reidd, and Begg (ER & B) firm on Alfred Road (figure 2.51).⁵⁰ The organization of the office led visitors through a sequence of spaces through a colonnaded path that ran parallel to a reflecting pool at the axis of the house before they finally arrived at the main building. The placement of the passage and the main house forced a circuitous path that revealed the façade of the building but not a frontal view. A large opening in the main house allowed for a continuation of the line of sight to the more intimate garden in the back.⁵¹ Bawa's designs consisted of simple, geometric courtyards in his buildings that created sequential experiences organized on a topographic itinerary that is connected by choreography of vistas. Bawa often professed his infatuation with the Italian Renaissance garden, a design strategy that, according to Claudia Lazaro, was based on the concept of gardens, divided into compartments, that delivered sequential experiences.⁵² In this way, Bawa aims to transfer experience of a Renaissance garden to Sri Lanka by using elements from the island, that is, colonial courtyards, *objet d'art*, and found objects native to the island. It underlines an eclectic modernist way, in which the formal and perceptual qualities of buildings from an entirely different culture can be transferred across culture.

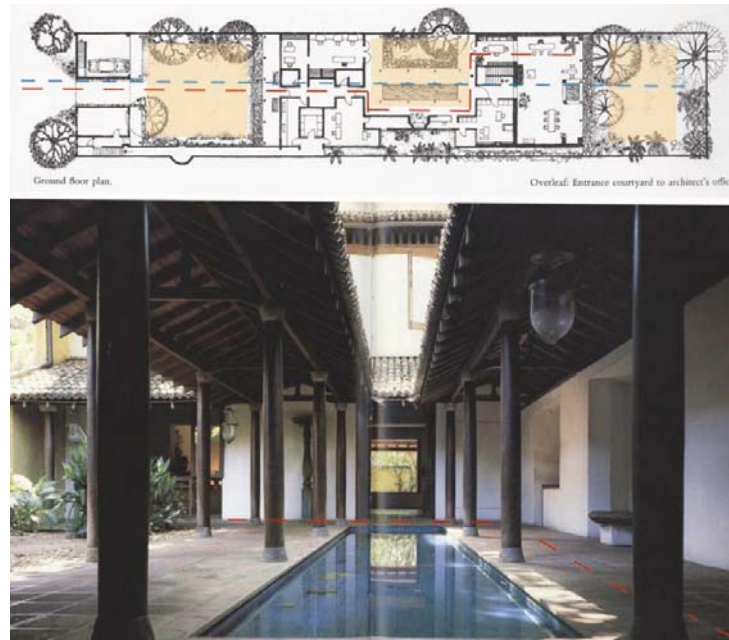


Figure 2.52: The architect's office, Colombo. The circulation path is in red, the axis is in blue, and the shaded areas are the courtyards (*Based on Taylor 1986*)

Hence, in Bawa's architecture, the use of a series of framed views, or rooms, that connected the compartments, resembles a strategy used in Italian gardens. Thus, geometry was the underlying principle in the formation of the compartments, which were then linked with the vistas. Actually, the picturesque qualities afforded by the organization of Bawa's architecture relates to the idea of promenade architecture. It also presents a strong delineation of space; however, each space flows effortlessly to another, facilitated by the choreography of the vistas. It is in this way that Bawa seemed to react to the notion of the open plan. Architecture of the modern movement in the 1920s took advantage of the construction systems based on the frame structure that promoted an open plan, freeing space from the constraints of a heavy wall structure. Bawa's architecture, conversely, relies on juxtaposition of spaces in which visual

connections establish the link between parts while clarity in the definition of space at the local level persisted.

Careful observations of Bawa's architecture and the experiences it proffers reveal novel aspects of his buildings. The ordering of the buildings reveals that inside each structure, the architect carefully classified and grouped functions according to the program. Furthermore, he infused each group with a particular formal expression, as exemplified in the Hanwella School, or applied a particular spatial organization as in the narrow bar in the Ena de Silva House. The order of the program in Bawa's architecture reveals a certain tendency to rationalize the organization based on adjacency and relationship, and thus he stressed economy. In relation to the functional aspect, Bawa's architecture also reveals his tendency to also choreograph the use of each room. The bedrooms and bathrooms in the Ena de Silva House and the Hanwella School as well as the bench in his hotel reflect a strong effort on his part to control not only the use of space but also the position of the human body. On the other hand, they allow little flexibility in the use of the rooms. The functions are articulated through the manipulation of basic architectural elements, vertical and horizontal planes on which those functions, such as sleeping, sitting, and washing the body, were embedded. In the treatment of functions of spaces, Bawa tended to strive for rational approaches and for economy, in which vertical and horizontal elements became functional.

2.4.3. Formal Appearances

Bawa managed to embed a sense of familiarity in his designs by the ordering of the plan and the sections based on the notion of courtyard as a type, the idea of a compartmentalization, and the strategy of a promenade, strategies providing the framework for the experience. However, the visual appearance within this frame of the

structuring also contributes strongly in evoking the sense of familiarity, the most prominent feature of which was the roof. In his own writings over time and also in Ulrik Plesner's recollections, Bawa's approach to the issue of the roof appears as a constant theme.

It's all in the roof! The roof is the answer to architecture in this climate, in this place in this context." ... Driving back in his Rolls from Anuradhapura we just looked at all old buildings along the road all with roofs and columns and verandah and open landscape in between. This must have been the end of 1959.⁵³

In an article in 1967, Bawa wrote:

I take an isolated point at random: what is now called the Sinhala tile. The Portuguese brought to Ceylon in the 1500s, the half-round clay tile of the Mediterranean countries, but roofs built in Ceylon with them were steeper pitched than the Portuguese roofs, to shed the huge rainfall of our country. The Dutch used the same tile and roof pitch, but raised the roof higher for coolness, with eaves and verandahs to shade the wall. Kandyans used their clay tile like a shingle, but still had the same wide eaves on their steep roofs: in meeting halls, wide eaves and a great roof on columns alone, no walls, an answer to a way of life—*great roof to give shade and shelter* and open to the drift of air an encompassing view. More than functional building, it is primarily rational building for it is rational to take into account both function and form, and admit beauty as well.⁵⁴

Such a stress on the roof is echoed in a piece written in the mid-1980s:

One unchanging element of all buildings is the roof—protective, emphatic, and all important—governing the aesthetic of whatever the period, wherever the place. Often a building is only a roof, columns, and floors—the roof dominant, shielding, giving *contentment of shelter*. Ubiquitous, pervasively present, the scale or pattern shaped by the building beneath. The roof, its shape, texture and proportion is the strongest visual factor.⁵⁵

Indeed, Plesner's account articulates the attention to the shape of the roof as central to Bawa's architecture.⁵⁶ Bawa argued that the appropriate appearance of contemporary

architecture in Sri Lanka lay in the omnipresence of the shape of the roof throughout the history of architecture on the island and throughout the landscape (figure 2.52).

According to the architect, the character of Sri Lankan architecture was best expressed through the pitched roof, clad in half-round clay tile. He proposed a simplified shape for the roof, taking the various shapes of roofs associated with various types of architecture down to their simple essential, that is, the triangular shape of the pitched roof. Such a strategy underscores the notion of the roof as a shelter, as an umbrella, an idea which might refer back to the simple buildings in rural Sri Lanka. One admirer of Bawa, Vladimir Ossipoff of Hawaii, stressed this idea in the following quote:

An architect from Ceylon once said that in his country the ideal house is an “umbrella” which protects the dweller from both sun and rain. This is a distillation of an idea to its simplest expression, and I like it.⁵⁷



Figure 2.53: Various shapes of the roofs in Sri Lanka. Note the emphasis on the shape and the texture of the roofs (shaded yellow). (*Based on Lewcock, Sansoni, Senanayake, 1998*)

Such a strategy in the design of the roof obviously supports the perception of the importance of the roof, articulating its pictorial effects in communicating the notion of shelter. Following this idea, Anjalendran noted,

... Geoffrey's use of the vernacular as a practical solution for climate despite his own emphasis (see Roof in his article) often tend to be symbolic: the 10'0" eave in the Montessori building lets in the rain, and in the case of Triton Hotel even Gales.⁵⁸

Such a comment seems to reiterate Bawa's tendency to create a set of visual experiences in which every element of the structure was calculated to achieve a unique pictorial effect. In some cases, such as the roof and the eaves of the Heritance, these pictorial effects take precedence over the practical need to provide protection against the elements.⁵⁹ Similar to his approach to the courtyard, in his treatment of the roof, the architect also resorts to the ideal aspect of the roof, that is, the notion type, contriving an image of the roof as an umbrella that provides shelter. On a visual level, the umbrella image created by the roof drew even more attention to its profile instead of to its actual shape. In this way, Bawa was able to strengthen the notion of a synchronic experience and thus avert any references to particular traditions. Bawa also turn to typological elements in his designs in his choice to emphasize the roofs. Further, the emphasis is not on the abstraction of the roofs or the conceptual aspect of them, but on the functional aspect of such elements. By functional, it also includes the experiential and perceptual qualities of the roofs. However, his attentions to scale, proportions, constructions, materials, and details—such as in the widened eaves, demonstrate that Bawa does not simply apply the typological elements uncritically. Instead, he aims to create different perceptual and visual qualities of the roofs in different buildings.

Along with the roofs, Bawa used various elements that related to various features of architecture throughout the history of the island, including columns, *mashrabiyya*, fenestrations, thick walls, and the use of common materials as well as the careful placement of found objects. While simplifying these elements, he maintained the figurative qualities and their representational basis that allowed visitors to recognize the origin of each element. In the use of these various elements, Bawa merged them seamlessly to allow visitors to appreciate them as an integral part of the design. Indeed, his design approaches left no room for irony. His columns or fenestrations were on the same scale as they would be in the *walauwe* or in colonial mansions. Furthermore, they were placed in accordance with their proper placement in local or colonial buildings. For example, his Dutch windows seemed to be properly placed in thick, plastered walls, resembling those of Dutch Colonial mansions. Since they all shared the use of thick walls, his various fenestrations conformed well to the ways the various architecture on the island treated them. In another case, his columns seemed to be properly placed so as to support the eaves of the verandahs. The use of found objects, such as the antique doors, the grinding stones in the Ena de Silva, and the fishermen's boat in the hotel also helped to strengthen the hotel's connections to the island through their figurative qualities. His house on 33rd Bagatelle Road is full with such objects, carefully arranged to heighten the movement and the contrasts within the house, including a pristine Roll Royce at the front. This eclectic tendency seems to be rooted in the long tradition of Sri Lanka Burghers, as Barbara Sansoni has highlighted in her statement that "their houses, pillared, verandahed, and airy, were filled with furniture, utensils, *objets d'art* and pottery from the long maritime history of our island centered on a trade route."⁶⁰

The use of these elements highlights Bawa's attitude toward the architectural heritage of Sri Lanka, which reflected a tendency toward multiple references. Instead,

Bawa exhibited a tendency toward eclecticism,⁶¹ in which he moved freely between many references drawn from the architecture of the island, encompassing sources as various as the architecture of the Sinhalese, the Tamils, the Muslims, the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the British. Bawa has asserted,

I like to regard all past and present good architecture in Sri Lanka as just that—good Sri Lanka architecture—for this is what it is, not Indian, Portuguese or Dutch, early Sinhalese or Kandyan or British Colonial, for all the good examples of these periods have taken the country itself into first account. When you look at the better examples of what remains of these earlier buildings, you find they all look at life in Sri Lanka squarely in the face. They look at the sun and the rain, at the views to be had, at the danger of termites and decay, and the social picture of the moment, and the needs of the life at the time.⁶²

However, as early as 1967, Bawa had already been warned about the limits of the past:

Although the past gives lessons, it does not give the whole answer to what must be done now. It is true that many materials available to us are the same as in the past. Their use, if sensible and right, is very alike, except where new techniques have added or changed their qualities.⁶³

Although Bawa's strategies, in effect, created a sense of synchronic experiences through the use of multiple elements, the arrangement, the scale, and the placement of these multiple elements expressed a sense of a unified whole, an organic unity. More aptly put, his architecture is a montage of various elements.

2.4.4. Structures and Materials

Bawa's architecture always features thick, white, plastered walls. However, in reality, these buildings are constructed on simple concrete frame structures. According to Rajiv Wanasundera, the common contemporary construction method on the island is the use of a concrete frame structure filled with masonry.⁶⁴ Traditional buildings in Sri Lanka were also based on masonry, wattle and daub, and a timber frame structure, as exemplified by various Sinhalese and Tamil houses. According to Wanasundera, a new

direction in the construction world might have started with the tea plantations, which led to a shift in construction practices to the use of light steel construction for plantation buildings with metal sheets as a replacement for the thatched roof. The influence of industrialization eventually affected houses and institutional buildings as well. In the early twentieth century, heavy masonry with heavy timber, light steel, and cast iron structures began to be replaced with concrete frame structures. The Public Works Department (PWD) and the State Engineering Corps of the British Colonial Administration might have been influential in commissioning new buildings using concrete frame structures and in training local workers in such a technique. Certainly, Andrew Boyd employed concrete construction in his house project in Kandy.⁶⁵ The Baur Building in Colombo, by Swiss architects K. Egger and W. Müller, might have been the island's first building constructed based on a modern frame structural system.⁶⁶ The use of concrete proved to be a very cheap way of constructing buildings on the island.⁶⁷ According to Wanasundera, in the early years of independence, the construction industry in the island was supported by local cement plants, steel factories, and ceramic manufacturing plants.⁶⁸

Bawa's buildings exemplified his approach to the local practice in building construction, following the common practice of using a concrete frame structure filled with light masonry. In part, this approach might have stemmed from Bawa's desire for pragmatism, which called for the use of locally available resources for his architecture. In addition, the political and economic situation on the island nation from the 1950s to the 1970s, one that stressed the importance of using locally produced goods, including those in the construction industry, might have contributed to this strategy. Bawa's concerns about building materials and construction techniques are evident in his statement that "the architecture that one does comes out of two things—the need of the

person and the type of materials available for use.”⁶⁹ We can find an example of this way of thinking in his exploration into the way roofs are constructed, which leads to the articulations of the timber truss structures and clay tiles.⁷⁰ Along this vein, William Jordy argued that architects of the modern movement in the 1920s turned to the technology of the day instead of striving to find utopian technologies.⁷¹ In the context of Europe in the 1920s, the technology of the day was the prevalent use of the frame structure. In Bawa’s case, instead of relying on construction technology that was unavailable on the island, the architect turned to local techniques and materials. In this way, he also responded to the challenge of decay that traditional materials—such as timber—posed to buildings in the island.

2.5. Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I have analyzed three works of architect Geoffrey Bawa to bring to light the issue of modernity in his architecture. Bawa’s oeuvre exemplifies a departure from modern architecture in Sri Lanka in the 1960s. Instead of making references to the mainstream architecture that was characterized by abstractionism and standardized, regulated elements, Bawa’s architecture shifts its references to the Dutch and Portuguese colonial and Kandyan architecture of the island in his use of courtyards, white-washed brick walls, and high-pitched roofs. Further, each of his buildings is planned using very different formal strategies, reflecting his careful attempts to engage to the site and to bring out the best aspects that the locations offered, including the topography and the views. The school at Hanwellia and the Heritance Hotel illustrate this approach. However, in location that offered limited features such as in the case of the Ena de Silva, Bawa responds by creating its own natural context through an enclosed garden that opens to the sky. Further, he instills the sense of experience of the site by integrating the movement through the site with spectacles, setting up a choreography of

vista. Thus, the first consideration of context in Bawa's architecture is the celebration of features of the site.

Bawa's architecture demonstrates his modernist sensibilities to challenge posed by the site and the program. However, his distinctiveness as a modernist appears in his ability to combine this way of designing with the use of elements in Sri Lanka, especially his use of elements from the Dutch and Portuguese colonial architecture. In this vein, his choice to use courtyards as a way to arrange spaces and to use sloped roofs is rooted in his effort to fit his design to the site. He turns to typological elements that underline the workability or functionality of these elements in Sri Lanka. He recognized that everyday life in the island revolved around courtyards and in the shaded, deep colonnaded verandahs bordering these courtyards and that big roofs were an appropriate response to the climatic condition in the island. However, these choices are not an effort to recreate historical architecture in the island or to turn to traditionalism. Instead, he used the traditional elements with a modern sensibility, emphasizing a rhetorical expression of function by highlighting its perceptual logic, so that the use of courtyards and roofs is not governed by traditional rules, but by site and by program-oriented circumstances. It is worth noted that his designs in other parts of the world, including in India, Maldives, and Indonesia, did not feature courtyards as the organizing element of the plan. The use of courtyards also exemplified lessons learned from architecture of the island in terms of the adaptation to the hot and humid climate. Courtyards obviously fostered a passive system for cooling down the building. Similarly, the use of pitched roof also provides a practical answer to address the issue of the persistent torrential rains in the island. In doing so, Bawa exaggerated these basic elements to articulate their typological properties, such as foregrounding the ideas of umbrella as a shelter. Remaining in the realm of type allowed the architect to generate

multiple variations in the designs that would fit the site and the program as well as to create multiple, synchronic associations.

His use of typological elements was not based on abstraction or conceptual approach. Instead, he emphasized the experiential qualities, hence, the functional aspect that encompassed not only the program but also the physical and emotional needs. The use of courtyards and high-pitched roofs is not simply a design strategy to organize designs formally and spatially. More importantly, the architect used these features as a way to invoke experiences of architecture in the island. Bawa's architecture in general highlights his preference for a limited palette, one based on simple, rectangular buildings, whitewashed walls, and saddle roofs. Indeed, the simplicity of the whitewashed structures recalls the simplicity of Portuguese colonial architecture, which featured clear and simple forms, often with blank white walls pierced by small openings with little decoration. This simplicity also emphasizes the functionality of the buildings. This particular characteristic of Bawa's design also alludes to the simplicity of Sinhalese domestic buildings, with their simple forms and blank walls encircled by galleries. Deep verandahs that are attached to the courtyard give off the experience of Dutch mansions. Courtyards in his buildings are attuned to the human scale and filled with building details that are rooted to the Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslim, as well as Portuguese and Dutch architecture. The details also incorporated objects into the design, both from antique buildings as well as sophisticated industrial products. Thus, the courtyards and roofs provides a framework in which Bawa created a montage of various elements related to the architectural history of the island as well as from outside the island. These multitudes of elements and influences included ideas such as the creation of the Renaissance garden and the promenade architecture. In effect, Bawa created a synchronic allusion that included different periods of time in the island

as well as different geographic locations, a form of modern eclecticism. In this way, to borrow an understanding of Le Corbusier of a house as machine to living in, Bawa used features of the Dutch and the Portuguese buildings as a chassis to resurrect experiences inside buildings. This chassis unified montage of elements that he deployed in his building, avoiding pastiche and creating a unified design. On a lighter note, elements that Bawa arranged in his building also created a sense of surprise, as he often placed unexpected objects as a part of his design, the examples of which were the antique door and the grinding stones in the Ena de Silva house, the rugged boat in the Heritage Hotel, or his vintage, pristine Rolls Royce convertible in his own house in Colombo.

These examples highlight the way in which the architect conveyed the sense of familiarity, which, in effect, is an articulation of the importance of experiences and memories. Besides the sense of familiarity, Bawa's architecture demonstrates strong clarity in its programmatic and functional aspects, which reflect a rational approach to planning with a concern for efficiency and economy. The plans and the manipulations of the architectural elements reveal a strong tendency to tightly control the use of space and the movement of the users. Furthermore, in Bawa's buildings, massive walls encased the actual concrete frame structure. Similarly, the triangular roofs were supported by novel, innovative structural systems based on timber trusses. One might recall that in the late nineteenth century, Chicago architects also encased the steel frame structure with masonry and ornaments. Underneath the trappings of familiar, common elements, Bawa architecture was supported by strict adherence to the ordering of programs, an emphasis on the functionality of spaces, and the use of simple concrete frame structure that often was combined with novel exploration of the roof supporting

systems. The rationalization of the programs, functions, and structural system acted as the governing principles that sustained the buildings.

The designs demonstrated the way in which references to the locale were played out on the level of experience. Just as Marcel Proust insisted on the remembrance of things past through sensory experiences without referring to a particular point in history, Bawa's designs alluded to the different facets of the architectural history of the island as well as from outside the island. The use of multiple associations also underlines a modernist subject who brought together perceptual and visual experiences from different unrelated cultures and different time period. Instead of presenting viewers with replications of historical element, the architect relied on allusions to multiple overlaid cultural images. The architect treated the rich architectural history of the island as his material, which he deployed with much playfulness. Elements derived from architecture of the island served as the media, opening up windows for association rather than asserting themselves as the message. These approaches set a sense of novelty in Bawa's architecture, one that is rooted in the appreciations of the place with its physical and non-physical features. How was Bawa architecture developed with regards to the architectural and socio-political development in Sri Lanka? Is the kind of architecture that Bawa's produced more of an isolated case that only happens in Sri Lanka? Is Bawa an example of a unique architect in the second half of the twentieth century? How does this kind of architecture exemplify modernity? Does it not show that Bawa was a traditionalist who brings some contemporary thinking into an otherwise traditional language? These are a set of questions that the analysis of the work of Geoffrey Bawa has raised. Chapter Three places Bawa's approach to architecture on the context of artistic and socio-cultural atmosphere in Sri Lanka. Chapter Four argues that Bawa's approach to architecture could also occur in different places, not in the sense of

repeated stylistic terms but in the attention to the perceptual qualities of the buildings and the surroundings. Chapter Five shows that the problem of incorporating the past and the creation of memories are a modernist approach.

Notes to Chapter 2:

¹ The selection were based on the examination of selected works of Bawa which were presented in his monograph by Brian Brace Taylor, his RIBA exhibition, field observation in Sri Lanka, and discussion with Dr. Lewcock.

² "As designers search for essentials in the art of architecture, it is refreshing to turn to the work of men who have been steadily following their own bent for decades, producing buildings of common sense and quality, and ignoring to a large extent fashionable theories and fads." Lewcock, Ronald, "Bawa: Arcadia in Sri Lanka," in *RIBA Journal*, (February 1986): 18.

³ Donald Friend noted that the son had shown an exceptional talent in drawing; a potential that was cut short by a vehicle accident. See Donald Friend, *The Diaries of Donald Friend, vol. 3*, Paul Hetherington (ed.), (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2005), 367.

⁴ As Plesner puts it in 2008, "The next significant job was Ena de Silva's house. We worked that out together. It has seven different courtyards. One big one in the middle, and small courtyards all around. ..." Plesner, Ulrik, "If there was Bawa there was Plesner: Interview with Deepali Modi and Ashok Ferey," *The SundayTimes Plus*, Colombo, Sri Lanka, Sunday, February 17, 2008, 7.

⁵ Taylor, Brian Brace, *Geoffrey Bawa: architect in Sri Lanka*, (Singapore: Butterworth Architecture, 1986); Robson, *Geoffrey Bawa*, 74-75; Plesner, "If there was Bawa there was Plesner: Interview with Deepali Modi and Ashok Ferey,"

⁶ This seems to parallel the development of the modern courtyard house, especially in the United States. MacIntosh demonstrated the historical evolution of the courtyard house in the U.S. in which he pointed to the development from bi-nuclear patio house to a linear, strip arrangement with alternating plans and patios. Serge Chermayeff at Harvard pushed the linear patio house by introducing multi-patios, with the view of pairing each patio with a particular part of the house to increase privacy; this scheme evolved to a scheme of a continuum from adult to children space. MacIntosh, Duncan, *The Modern Courtyard House: A history*, (London: Lund Humphries for the Architectural Association, 1973) 17-19.

⁷ Plesner, "If there was Bawa there was Plesner: Interview with Deepali Modi and Ashok Ferey," 7.

⁸ Exemplified in Bawa's early buildings, such as St. Thomas Preparatory School and St. Bridget Montessori School. Ratnavibhusana mentions that Bawa noticed that a low sloped roof did not shelter the interior properly from torrential rains. (Conversation with Anura Ratnavibhusana, December 2006).

⁹ Plesner, Ulrik, "If there was Bawa there was Plesner: Interview with Deepali Modi and Ashok Ferey," *The SundayTimes Plus*, 7.

¹⁰ Robson, *Geoffrey Bawa*, 89. According to Robson, derived from his interview with Ratnavibhusana, Bawa generated the design directly on the site.

¹¹ Anjalendran, C.; Wanasundera, Rajiv, "Trends and Transitions: A review of styles and influences on the built form in Sri Lanka (1940-1990)," *Architecture+ Design*, Vol. 7, no. 2 (March-April 1990): 28.

¹² "The buildings themselves are made from plentiful local material, eg bricks, half-round country tiles and 'cadjan' roof of woven seasoned coconut leaves." Bawa, Geoffrey, "Ceylon: A Philosophy of Building," *The Architect's Journal*, (15 Oct. 1969): 940.

¹³ Bawa, "Ceylon: A Philosophy of Building," 939.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, 939.

¹⁵ Bawa, G. "Statement of the architect," Brian Brace Taylor, *Geoffrey Bawa*, 16.

¹⁶ The basic organization of Buddhist monk houses relates to the tradition of ancient Buddhist viharas. See Lewcock, Ronald; Sansoni, Barbara; Senanayake, Laki, *The Architecture of an Island: the living heritage of Sri Lanka*, (Colombo: Barefoot (pvt) Ltd., 1998), 42.

¹⁷ Bawa, "Ceylon: A Philosophy of Building," 940.

¹⁸ . An interior snapshot of the mezzanine and the diagonal stairs creates a picture that reminds us of Le Corbusier's sketches of the interior of his houses in the 1920s

¹⁹ Hugo Haring distinguished three functions of a window, light, view, and ventilation. See MacIntosh, *The Modern Courtyard House: A history*, 27. Beatriz Colomina explores the contrasting windows of that of Adolf Loos, focusing more as lighting and ventilation devices against that of Le Corbusier, which serves more as picture frame. See Colomina, "The Split Wall," in Colomina, (ed.), *Sexuality and Space*, (Princeton: Princeton Arch. Press, 1992) 73-128.

²⁰ For thorough discussions on the history of economy of the island, see for examples de Silva, K.M., *A History of Sri Lanka*, (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1981), 491-560; Goonewardena, Kanishka, "Aborted Identity: the commission and omission of a monument to the nation, Sri Lanka, circa 1989," *Radical History Review*, Issue 82 (Winter 2002): 141-56; Nithyanandam, V., "Ethnic Politics and Third World Development: some lessons from Sri Lanka's experience," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 21, no. 2, (2000): 283-311; Wickramasinghe, Nira, "Sri Lanka's Conflict: Culture and lineages from the past," *Journal of International Affairs*, , vol. 60, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2006): 107-18.

²¹ Although the interlocking of the pool and the lobby is a distinctive feature in the Triton Hotel, this strategy occurs in one of Bawa's previous projects, the Neptune Hotel (1974), in which a swimming pool at the center of the courtyard formed by the H-shaped building penetrates the open dining room at the middle part of the hotel. In this project, the restaurant, the pool, the courtyard, and the ocean is aligned along the *transversal* axis. However, it lacks the grand scale of the Triton Hotel. More importantly, this formal alignment is not incorporated to the procession route and the choreography of vista.

²² "The entrance Court gives a sense of welcome—a space contained by the lines of steps and retaining walls." Bawa, Geoffrey; Bon, Cristoph; Sansoni, Dominic, *Lunuganga*, (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2006 (1990)), 15.

²³ Bawa on the scenographic arrangement of the arrival, lecture in Dhaka, 1985. See Robson, (2002), 164.

²⁴ Levine discussed the way in which F.L Wright often used sculptures to help articulate the representational characteristics of his architecture. See Levine, Neil, "Abstraction and representation in modern architecture: the international style of Frank Lloyd Wright," *AA Files 11*, (Spring 1986), 3-21.

²⁵ As explained in Lewcock, Sansoni, Senanayake. This period was roughly from 1720s to 1770s. See Lewcock, Sansoni, Senanayake, *The Architecture of an Island: the living heritage of Sri Lanka*, 173-75.

²⁶ Kurt Forster highlights the relationships between antiquity and modernity in his discussion of the Maison la Roche, in which he argues that Corbusier referred to partial clues from Roman houses to address formal and functional concerns in a modern house. According to Forster, Corbusier saw in Roman houses the presence of rational order that also addressed functional issues in the use of standards instead of personal preferences. Forster's analyses of Maison La Roche demonstrates the way Le Corbusier made correspondences to Roman design in the way the architect played with the notion of symmetry-asymmetry, clarity of form, relationships between the interior of the house and the order of the city, and more importantly, the notion of the relationships between movements of the human body and the experiences inside the house. In particular, Forster underlines the reciprocal relationship between the entrance court and the double-story hall in the interior of the house, which demonstrated a similar treatment in terms of scale and the use of balconies. Such a strategy recalls the progression inside a Roman house as Corbusier had noted, which incorporated a sequence of spaces through a succession of atria. See Forster, Kurt W., "Antiquity and Modernity in the La Roche-Jeanneret Houses on 1923," *Oppositions*, 15/16, (Winter/Spring 1979); reprinted in Hays, K. Michael, (ed.) *Oppositions Reader*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), 463-85. Forster's discussion of Maison la Roche was echoed by Richard Etlin in *Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier: The Romantic Legacy*, (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press; 1994), 115-18. Along a similar line, Frampton also pointed to the notion of the passage which was integrated to the wall, creating a sense of "walking up the wall." See Frampton, Kenneth, *Le Corbusier*, (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 7.

²⁷ The campus was designed and built between 1979 and 1981. Robson, *Geoffrey Bawa*, 156.

²⁸ Bawa, Geoffrey, "Bawa on Bawa," in Meng, Tan Kok, *Asian Architect 2*, (Singapore: Select Book, 1999), 41

²⁹ *ibid.*, 41.

³⁰ *ibid.*, 40. Also, in my short visit to Bawa's house in Colombo, literature on garden appeared prominently in the stack of books and magazines in his bedroom.

³¹ In his description of the approach to the gate of his garden, Bawa wrote, "Across the water in the distance is seen a hint of a roof, two white columns partly screened by trees, a line of terrace wall—all set against what appears to be wild untrammelled jungle. Then past the small houses and gardens of the village of Dedduwa, a small temple and sacred Bo

tree shrine, across flat rice fields, on through a mixed plantations of fruit trees, to the narrow village roadway that leads at last to the land of Lunuganga." Bawa, Bon, Sansoni, *Lunuganga*, 15.

³² See Bawa, Bon, Sansoni, (2006 (1990)).

³³ Plesner, Ulrik, "A ten-year old garden in Ceylon," in Taylor, *Geoffrey Bawa*, 44.

³⁴ Anjalendran, C., *Letter to Dr. Lewcock*, Sept. 11th, 1985, retrieved from Dr. Lewcock's archives. (Underline from the letter).

³⁵ Bawa, Bon, Sansoni, *Lunuganga*, 12.

³⁶ Bawa, Draft prepared as notes for the introduction to his monograph by Brian Brace Taylor. Unpublished, retrieved from the personal archives of Dr. Ronald Lewcock, 4.

³⁷ Bawa on Bawa, in Meng, Tan Kok (ed.), *Asian Architect* 2, 41.

³⁸ "Bawa on Bawa," in Meng, Tan Kok (ed.), *Asian Architect* 2, 42.

³⁹ Bawa has designed his garden at Lunuganga, on a promontory off the Bentota beach, for over forty years, practically throughout his career as an architect. Indeed, his interest in designing his own garden caused his to study architecture (Lewcock, Ronald, "Bawa: Arcadia in Sri Lanka," 18).

In relation to the connections between the interior and the exterior, Bawa wrote: "As there was a possibility of grand views from the house—across the lake to the island—the walls of the existing closed-in verandas were demolished and the main rooms then opened widely to the terraces and lawns which were beginning to take shape. These rooms thus became roofed spaces which contained furniture, paintings, and objects—always seen against the backdrop of trees, lake, and sky and were, in effect, the first gallery but seldom used for living excepting during the worst weather. Because life at Lunuganga is essentially spent in the garden the two bedrooms in the house with their enclosed courtyards have a special sense of private seclusion (Bawa, Bon, Sansoni, *Lunuganga*, 61)."

⁴⁰ Lewcock, Sansoni, Senanayake, *Architecture of an Island*.

⁴¹ The hotel was a part of the government venture to manage the economy, including tourism, under government auspices (Robson, *Geoffrey Bawa*, 58), making it the first tourist hotel in the island (Taylor, (1986), 126). Thus, Bentota Beach Hotel exemplifies a difference in the tourism enterprise between pre- and post 1977, in which the pre-1977 was a government enterprise.

⁴² Serendib Hotel was designed and constructed between 1967 and 1970 (Taylor, (1986), 150; Robson, (2002), 103). Indeed, the architect was fond of the Serencib hotel (Lewcock, Ronald, "Bawa: Arcadia in Sri Lanka," 19).

⁴³ De Quincy, Quatremere, "Type," transl. Anthony Vidler, *Oppositions* 8, (Spring 1977), reprinted in K. Michael Hays (ed.), *Oppositions Reader* (Princeton: Princeton Arch. Press, 1998), 618.

⁴⁴ Argan, Giulio Carlo, "On the Typology of Architecture," transl. J. Rykwert, *Architectural Design*, December 1963, 564-65.

⁴⁵ Vidler, Anthony, "The Idea of Type: The transformation of the Academic Ideal, 1750-1830, *Oppositions* 8, Spring 1977, , reprinted in K. Michael Hays (ed.), *Oppositions Reader* (Princeton: Princeton Arch. Press, 1998), 448-52. De Quincy belonged to those who sought for primary forms in nature and architecture, a view based on physiognomy. The later view of the generative aspects of typology would include that of J.N.L. Durand and they were influenced by courses in the natural science which had shifted into examinations of anatomy in developing taxonomy of flora and fauna in nature. Ultimately, the notion of typology based on the constitutional rules of basic, irreducible elements related to the typology based on functions. This concern with typology of functions seemed to dwell well with the course of abstraction and rationalization of architecture.

⁴⁶ The courtyard was one of the basic building types in architecture. For example, Ronald Lewcock has argued that architecture is based on archetypes, one of which is the archetype of courtyard houses. Developed in the course *Genesis of Architecture*; published, among others, in Lewcock, R., "'Generative Concept' in Vernacular Architecture," Marcel Velinga (ed.) *Vernacular Architecture in the 21st Century*, (London: Taylor & Francis, 2002) 208-10.

⁴⁷ In his description of his garden at Lunuganga, Bawa elaborated his views on the role of trees. "The rubber trees which could remain were only those which gave scale and proportion and which merged with the remaining hardwoods." Bawa, Geoffrey; Bon, Cristoph; Sansoni, Dominic, *Lunuganga*, (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish, 2006 (1990)), 12. Further, he mentioned "The seventeenth century wooden columns of the small loggia being continued visually by the trunks of the trees above its roof." Bawa, Bon, Sansoni, 15.

⁴⁸ ... all facades which have had to be softened by landscape as even detail has been inadequate. (Anjalendran, C., *Letter to Dr. Lewcock*, Sept. 11th, 1985, retrieved from Dr. Lewcock's archives.)

⁴⁹ It is worth considering the way Ulrik Plesner contemplated on the role of vegetations in the built environment in the island: "Everything in seen against a background of constant change and drama, of light and wind and sudden rain.The plants are a great richness and no building or townplan can be conceived without them. ... They are a part of life, and people and plants are inseparable. So much of life is outdoors. People sit bellow plants, appear and vanish

behind them, walk under them and lean against them, and gossip under their shade. They are part of every house." Plesner, Ulrik, "Ulrik Plesner," in *Living Architecture: Scandinavian Design*, Issue 5, (1986): 84.

⁵⁰ In 1961, the office of Bawa was commissioned to design a residence for Dr. Bartholomeus. However, before the building was finished, the client left off for Australia. As a result, Bawa occupied the house and turned into the office for ER & B firm. Robson, *Geoffrey Bawa*, 84. In recent years, this building has been converted into a restaurant. The generous backyard has long been filled with an extension of the dining rooms.

⁵¹ Such a strategy, inadvertently, recalled the way in which Le Corbusier described his observation of a Roman house in Pompeii. See Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, Frederick Etchells, transl., (New York: Praeger, 1960 (1923)), 169-70. This hint might have led Curtis to describe the architect's office as a reflection of a Roman house. See Curtis, W. J. R., *Modern Architecture Since 1900*, 3rd ed., (London: Phaidon, 1996) 580-82. Such a strategy also occurred again in his description of the entrance court of Lunuganga, "The other—and larger—loggia is transparent and leads through the East Terrace, but its columns and windowed wall define the space of the Entrance Court." Bawa, Bon, Sansoni, *Lunuganga*, 15.

⁵² Lazaro, Claudia, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1990), 69-99.

⁵³ Plesner, Ulrik, "If there was Bawa there was Plesner: Interview with Deepali Modi and Ashok Ferey.," 7

⁵⁴ Bawa, "Ceylon: a philosophy for building," 940 (italics by the author).

⁵⁵ Bawa, "Statement by the Architect," in Taylor, *Geoffrey Bawa*, 16 (italics by the author).

⁵⁶ The discussion on the shape of the roof in Bawa's oeuvre may be best highlighted in the case of his Parliament Building of Sri Lanka. Vale has identified the shape of the roof as the strongest formal element through which the architect communicated his intentions. Vale praises the design of the roof as capable of evoking multiple references, benefiting from the island's eclectic history, such as references to different kinds of temples and colonial fortresses. In this way, Bawa was able to avoid using a single reference or combination of references, without resorting to pastiche, largely because of the dominance of the roof, relying on an integrated tradition of roof construction in the island. In tune with Vale's assessment of the roof of the Parliament Building, the shapes of the roofs of the case studies above avoid any resemblance to a particular shape of architecture in Sri Lanka. Vale, Lawrence, J. *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1992) 194-197.

⁵⁷ Vladimir Ossipoff, speaking of Geoffrey Bawa, 1997, quoted in Sakamoto, Dean, "'You Will Like It When You See It: The Ossipoff house,'" in *Hawaiian Modern: The architecture of Vladimir Ossipoff*, Dean Sakamoto, Karla Britton and Diana Murphy (ed.), (Honolulu : Honolulu Academy of Arts ; New Haven : In association with Yale University Press, 2007), 107.

⁵⁸ Anjalendran, C., *Letter to Dr. Lewcock*, Sept. 11th, 1985, retrieved from Dr. Lewcock's archives.

⁵⁹ In his defense, Bawa seems to acknowledge such a problem as a part of the experience in the hotel. "In the monsoon it's very dramatic when all the wind from the whole south-west coast seems to blow through the lobby and you see people running horizontally to and fro, and their bills are blown into the reflecting pool." (Bawa in a lecture in Dhaka, 1985; quoted in Robson, *Geoffrey Bawa*, 164).

⁶⁰ Sansoni, Barbara, "A Background to Geoffrey Bawa," in Taylor, *Geoffrey Bawa*, 181.

⁶¹ It is worth noting to recall a phrase from Diderot in 1755 that was mentioned by Peter Collins: "An eclectic is a philosopher who tramples underfoot prejudice, tradition, seniority, universal consent, authority, and everything which subjugates mass opinion; who dares to think for himself, go back to the clearest general principles, examine them, discuss them, and accept nothing except on the evidence of his own experience and reason; and who, from all the philosophies which he has analysed without respect to persons, and without partiality, makes a philosophy of his own, peculiar to himself." Collins, Peter, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture 1750-1950*, (Montreal & London: Faber & Faber and McGill University Press, 1998 (1965)), 17

⁶² Bawa, Draft prepared for the introduction to his monograph by Brian Brace Taylor. Unpublished, retrieved from the personal archives of Dr. Ronald Lewcock, 2.

⁶³ Bawa, Geoffrey, "Ceylon: A Philosophy of Building," 940.

⁶⁴ This discussion on the building practice in Sri Lanka is based on the conversation with Rajiv Wanasundera, November 8th, 2008. In the observation in Sri Lanka in December 2006, the author observed that most of construction activities were carried on the base of the use of manual labors in which the construction utilized concrete frame structure.

⁶⁵ *The Architectural Review*, v. 101, (Mar 1947): 97-100.

⁶⁶ *Marg*, Vol. 5, no: 3, (1951): 45-49.

⁶⁷ Conversation with Dr. Lewcock.

⁶⁸ According to Wanasundera, Ceylon had three cement plants in Jaffna, Puntalama, and Baticaloa, and a steel factory that supplied bars and rebars to the construction industry. In the 1960s, the government of Ceylon also founded a

ceramic corporation that produced fixtures, characterized by their predominantly all-white products, for the domestic market. Thus, locally-produced fixtures, also white in color, prominently appear in many of Bawa's buildings.

⁶⁹ Bawa, "Bawa on Bawa," in Meng, Tan Kok, *Asian Architect* 2, 38.

⁷⁰ Robson noted that Bawa, in the early 1960s, had explored various possibilities for the construction of the roof. In this exploration, Bawa examined various types of tiles available in the island, such as "Calicut" and Kandyan tiles and corrugated cement sheet. He finally settled with "the half-round 'Portuguese' tile" which had "a pleasing texture and good thermal mass." Such consideration of the choice of sheeting obviously necessitated examination of proper structural supports, including the rafters and trusses. Robson, *Geoffrey Bawa*, 84.

⁷¹ Jordy, William, "The Symbolic Essence of Modern European Architecture of the Twenties and Its Continuing Influences," originally published in *JSAH* 22, no. 3, Oct. 1963; republished in Jordy, *"Symbolic Essence" and Other Writings on Modern Architecture and American Culture*, (New York: Yale Univ. press, 2005), 139.

Chapter 3

Bawa in Various Contexts

3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have analyzed three case studies selected from the oeuvre of Geoffrey Bawa. The analysis called attention to the ways Bawa has engaged traditions and history that existed in the architecture on the island of Sri Lanka. The analysis suggests that the architect formed an attitude prioritizing eclectic approaches, taking advantage of the traditions, history, and materials of the island to form his spatial, formal, and technical designs. Crucial in this architectural strategy is the utilization of experience, both in terms of visual and tactile experiences, and the use of multiple references. The issue then is how Geoffrey Bawa came to use such approaches? What kinds of influences were likely to have formed the basis of Bawa's architectural approach?

The previous analysis postulates that the three case studies represent an integral part of the evolution of Bawa's architectural career from the early 1960s to the early 1980s. This chapter intends to reconstruct multiple factors that surround the development of Bawa's architecture. It explores people, thoughts, and historical events that occurred around him. However, it should be noted with caution that such events surrounding his life may not have had direct, causal relationships to the development of his architectural vocabulary. Instead, this chapter suggests that comprehension of the spectrum of events will provide a picture of trends and tendencies which acted as backgrounds against which Bawa's architecture should be understood. Treading into the fourth decades of the architect's career, this analysis uses the names Ceylon and Sri Lanka interchangeably, reflecting the change in the name of the island.

3.2. The Danish Connections

I have demonstrated that Bawa's architecture exemplified influences from architectural traditions in Sri Lanka and also from contemporary architecture from abroad. Taking this argument further, the development of Bawa's architectural ideas seemed to suggest a presence of multiple references. As Anjalendran noted:

... his architectural vocabulary has little geographical limit, and has the advantage of wide travel and more often the influence of the numerous interesting and amusing persons who weave through his life.¹

Early in his architectural career, Bawa met Ulrik Plesner, a young Danish architect, who quickly became a partner in the office of E.R. & B. Originally, Plesner had come to Ceylon in 1955 to work with Minette de Silva. However, he soon formed a close association with Bawa and changed his allegiances. The two then worked together over the span of ten years, from 1957 to 1967, in which time the two produced designs that were fundamental in the development of both architectural oeuvres. Such collaboration was obviously instrumental in the development of Bawa's approach to architecture. In fact, Dr. Ronald Lewcock has suggested that Ulrik Plesner exerted instrumental influence over Bawa.² Plesner himself stated the extent of his influence, noting that "I learned from his amusing poetry, he (Bawa) from my poetic professionalism."³

Further, he was more explicit in assessing his partnership with Bawa.

Basically I was the teacher and Geoffrey the artist. ... He wasn't interested in kitchens or toilets or foundations or any of that, but had a fantastic sense of space and planting and a very sure visual talent. We saw things the same way, we agreed on everything but I was the one who provided practical foundation, the one who knew how it was done. How to make a door, how to make a window, how to make a roof, how to make the tree standup. That's why I said we went hand in hand like that.⁴

Ulrik Plesner was the son of a Danish architect, Johan Plesner, and an English mother. He also had a stepfather who was also a renowned architect in Denmark of that time. According to Faber, in the history of Denmark architecture in the late 19th century and the early 20th, the major trends in Danish architecture was a movement that turned to values of local architecture, seeking inspiration in tradition and reacting against individualism, inspired by Charles Voysey and Baillie Scott.⁵ This movement was a reaction against the ideas of the time, such as the Art Nouveau. Faber has suggested that this movement sought to alter the direction of Danish architecture by developing a “non-decorated architecture, based on Danish building traditions,” led by figures such as Ulrik Plesner (another prominent Danish architect at the turn of the twentieth century), Jensen Klint, and Ivar Bentsen.⁶ Given this background, it seems safe to assume that the young Plesner grew up in an environment influenced by the pursuits of his father. Indeed, he mentioned that he grew up around his father projects.⁷

In a recent interview, Plesner stated that competition permeated a fundamental part of the Danish architectural world.⁸ Most major projects, especially those of public works, were decided based on competition. Faber has outlined the common path in the education of an architect in Denmark in the first half of the 20th century. He stated that contemporary Danish architecture up to that period had been greatly conditioned by competition for major public works, driven by the desire to solicit the best possible solutions.⁹ This competition was beneficial in enabling young architects to compete with other architects on the same footing, which in turn also impacted architecture schools, often leading to the achievements of the best-known Danish architects.¹⁰ Architectural education in Denmark was explored further by Atkinson, who elaborated on a system in which a person could either acquire an architectural degree through a five-year program, entered after a six-month stay on a site and becoming enrolled as a member of a trade

union, or through apprenticeship to a trade, in which the student would be admitted in the third-year level in architecture schools.¹¹ Furthermore, the system was strengthened by a practice of the leading figures in the field who helped train the younger generation.¹² Architectural practices were usually small firms with only a few partners assisted by qualified architects or students.¹³ From observations of the context of architectural education and practice in Denmark, Atkinson concluded:

There are no quantity surveyors. There are few general contractors, and work is usually priced and contracted for by trades. This means that the architect dominated the building works. To facilitate this there is, on any reasonable sized site, a resident architect, the 'kunduktor,' who acts as coordinator and clerk of works. That such an organization could come into being and continue to exist is due both to the size of the country and to the relative simplicity of its economy and to the prestige, almost snob, value which the 'architect designed' product enjoys with the Danish people.¹⁴

Further, he argued that such systems of education and practice ensured the achievement of a high standard in the field.

Thus through training and practice the Danish architect is master of the whole process building. This explains why the detailed design of his building is of such a high quality, materials are used correctly, and with complete confidence, and it is rare to see something which the architect obviously has overlooked and left to the builder to bodge the best he can.¹⁵

Moreover, Faber underlined this statement in his examination of contemporary Danish architecture.

[Examples in this book demonstrated that] conventional materials play a predominant role Danish architects have always, in their design, been able to rely on a high quality of workmanship, be it for example a case of workmanlike bricklaying or the choice of well-tried prefabricated units.¹⁶

Thus, this illustration of the trends and tendencies in Danish architectural education and practice may provide a strong background to Plesner's claim of how he was the teacher who, together with Bawa, created designs that worked. The system

ensured that young architects who had graduated from the academy had a profound knowledge on how buildings should be constructed, down to their minute details. Such a sensibility was a contribution in Plesner's association with Bawa. Anura Ratnavibhusana recalled that Bawa tended to begin a design processes from sketches of sectional cuts of the proposed design.¹⁷ Bawa would continue to work out details through these sectional cuts, ensuring that the building would operate properly before he moved to consider the plans and elevations of the project.

3.3. Trends in Danish Architecture

Danish architecture was obviously a part of several greater spheres, the first of which was that of the Scandinavian world. Marian Donnelly suggested that three major trends had occurred in the architectural scene in Scandinavia in the inter-war years: the tendency toward Romanticism with a nationalistic tinge, a revival of Neo-Classicism, and then the advance of International Functionalism.¹⁸ However, these developments in the Danish architectural world seemed to betray a particular attitude. Atkinson suggested that Danish architecture was characterized by simplicity and clarity in accordance to the character of the nation and represented in its simple flag. He painted a picture of Denmark as exhibiting this distinctive feature in architecture.

Denmark is founded on chalk and clay; and brick, tile, lime and cement are the raw materials of Danish architecture. ... These traditional building materials and especially the long roofs of pantiles which themselves echo the simple thatched roofs of country farmhouses, have influenced Danish plan forms up to the present time.¹⁹

Following this argument, Danish architects exemplified a particular attitude in relationships to the developing trends and tendencies in the architectural world. Faber stated that in the early 1920s, "Danish architecture was dominated by a simplified,

formal neo-classicism, which coincided with efforts of sober social and functional purport.”²⁰ Faber continued by stating that Danish architects always derived influences from abroad but always absorbed them to fit Danish conditions, affected by their habits, climate, and traditions in craft.²¹ Stressing this tendency, Faber stated that:

The different stylistic periods followed each other in smooth transition with buildings that were felt to be variations of the theme of the ‘Danish house’ rather than outstanding examples for contemporary international styles.²²

Hiort, writing in 1949, also dwelled on a similar point of view, stressing the notion that Danish architects always held on to a centuries-old tradition of using the building material most prevalent in Denmark, brick.

The new thoughts and ideas that penetrated from the south have always been met with a healthy skepticism, in conjunction with a leaning toward moderation—an essential trait of Danish character—has brought about a transformation of these foreign imports to suit Danish tastes and conditions. ... An important influence on this transformation of imported architectural styles must be ascribed to the building material that for three-quarters of a millennium has been the staple of Danish architecture: fired brick.²³

The author, through a set of examples in his book, argued that up to that time, every external influence, such as Romanesque and Gothic architecture, had been transformed to accommodate the use of brick as the main material.

However, Denmark was not always immune from the spread of new ideas in the architectural scene. A decisive moment came with the Stockholm Exhibition of 1930, which brought the ideas of international functionalism to the Scandinavian countries, including Denmark.²⁴ Faber stated that the exhibition indicated the dawn of a new era for young Scandinavian architects, awakening interest in Le Corbusier, among others.²⁵ In the wake of this new interest in functionalism, however, Faber argued that the Danish

showed a particular attitude toward the advance of progressive ideas in that a wholesale acceptance of international functionalism was avoided by careful consideration of the role of Danish building traditions, including the persistence of the use of brick as the main material.²⁶ The attitude in the Scandinavian countries also exemplified a similar tendency, so by the end of the 1930s, the movement had met strong reactions against a rigid and formalistic interpretation, leading to the approach based on spontaneity (*spontanitet*), which signified “a more naturalistic, informal way of working.”²⁷ Faber pointed out that a group of Danish architects considered that the notion of relationships between form, construction, and functions of a building should be in accordance with the practical virtues of Danish building traditions. At the same time, these architects appreciated the external influences, which facilitated their paving a way for the development of a new architecture in Denmark outside the trappings of historical styles. In Faber’s account, two of the personalities that played important roles in bridging the functionalists’ ideas with tendencies in Danish architecture advocated by Plesner the elder and Jesper-Klint were Ivan Bentsen and Kay Fisker.²⁸ An example of the work of the latter, with his partners C.F. Moller and Povl Stegmann, was Aarhus University (figure 3.1), which combined aspects of functionalism, in terms of the site plan. The design took into consideration the topography, the direction of the sun, and the distribution of functions along with the Danish traditions of form and materials in the use of pitched roofs, also, influenced by pure forms and, of course, bricks.²⁹ Another example of such an approach to architecture was exemplified by architects Erik Moller and Flemming Lassen in their design for the Nyborg Public Library (figure 3.2), which also demonstrated sensitivity to the site, clarity in the organization of function, and the use of brick materials for a building form that incorporated the tradition of the pitched roof.³⁰

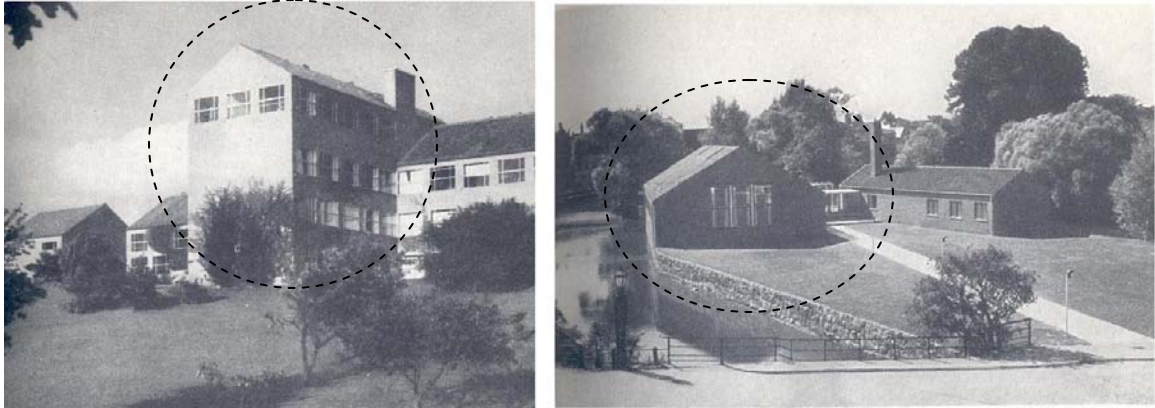


Figure 3.1: Aarhus University (left) and Nyborg Library (right), Kay Fisker. Note the emphasis on the shape of the roofs and the scale of the buildings (dashed lines)
(Source: *Hiort, Contemporary Danish Architecture*, 1949)

Faith to the Danish traditions, especially in terms of the consideration of available local materials, proved pivotal in the following decades. World War II was a difficult time for Danish architects, for a scarcity of resources affected architecture and building practices. These constraints, however, gave impetus to reviving their interest in the tradition of using bricks along with local methods of construction.³¹ This tendency prevailed throughout the years following the war, which Faber summarized as follows:

“During the first decade after the war, orthodox building methods and materials were still economically superior to the less orthodox system so that there was good reason for many Danish architects to continue in promoting the most valuable aspects of Danish building tradition based on craftsmanship. The discussion between modernists and traditionalists was, in those years, apt to keen; yet there was no real conflict between the partisans of different concepts, nor was there any major conflict between the Danish architectural training at the Academy of Arts and certain more progressive efforts. Danish moderation prevailed. Even the more sentimentally inclined architects showed a certain Apollonian self-restraint whilst, on the other hand, some of the more formally inclined architects produced organically derived details and fine human features.^{32”}

The end of the war brought new influences in Danish architecture, particularly those of F. L. Wright and Mies van der Rohe.³³ Such developments produced a variety of thought in Danish architecture, with interest in the vernacular tradition running side by side with interests in developments from abroad.

It seems that Plesner's influence was not limited to the realm of the practicality of the designs on which he collaborated. Moreover, his influence seems to cover an approach to architecture itself. Their work, such as the Ena de Silva house, exemplified to a large degree an interest in the types, forms, and materials used in the architecture of the island.

3.4. Danish Architecture in the International Scene

In 1997, Anderson outlined the prevailing architectural thought in America, England, and Scandinavia, forming one side of the debate in the direction of architecture in the years directly after the war.³⁴ One side of the debate was a direct reaction to the focus on the white, abstract architecture promoted by the exhibitions of Weissenhoff Siedlung in 1927 and that of the MoMA in 1932, revealing that a diverse stream of architectural thought from the 1920s was still in play.³⁵ One issue in this debate was the perception of the major trend in architecture, the abstract white, as functional architecture, although Hitchcock and Johnson strenuously asserted that the masters of modern architecture were not functionalists.³⁶ Furthermore, Giedion argued that the characteristics of the new monumentality in the white, abstract architecture could lead to the acceptance of modern architecture by all societies, the seed of which were sown in Le Corbusier's proposal for the League of the Nations.³⁷ On the other hand, other critics, such as the editors of the *Architectural Review*, argued for the need for modern

architecture to pay close attention to “individual and social conditions,” leading them to embrace Swedish New-Empiricism in their June 1947 edition.³⁸ Anderson argued that such an argument about the direction taken in Swedish architecture was also in tune to that of Kay Fisker in Denmark, pointing to a series of articles produced by Fisker, covering a wide range of topics, from his study on Voysey, Baillie-Scott, and Louis Sullivan to his views on functionalism.³⁹

Kay Fisker was an influential figure in Danish architecture from the 1930s to the 1960s. Faber underlined Fisker’s position in Denmark architecture, yielded through his projects, such as the Aarhus University and housing projects, and through his teaching, in which he advocated the responsibilities of architects to the inhabitants.⁴⁰ Furthermore, he argued that “Right up to his death in 1965, Kay Fisker came to be regarded as this country’s most important interpreter and developer of functional Danish tradition. ... [one example of which was the building for the Mother’s Help Organization in Copenhagen].”⁴¹ In terms of Fisker’s architectural thought, Anderson pointed to Fisker’s agenda, in which he wished to retain the program of functionalism, instead of its style, highlighted in a quotation from a Fisker’s article,

Now, after the first victory of the early raw functionalism, we should be concerned with the development of the more vigorous and human side of functional architecture: a clear and functional frame around modern existence, created with new means; further development of tradition, perhaps, but not a return to form past and gone. The barren qualities of functionalism came not from the relinquishment of the old, but rather from the failure to utilize in a sufficiently imaginative manner the possibilities of the new—new materials and construction, new social conditions.⁴²

The tendency in the Danish architectural world represented by Fisker seems to provide a connection to tendencies in its neighboring Sweden and, farther away, in England. Indeed, Faber used a particular term, “functional tradition,” to explain the

attitudes of Danish architects in the 1930s and the 1940s in relationship to materials and construction methods. He stated that

Right up to our time, Danish architecture has been influenced by a functional tradition which had dominated large parts of building activities, with close relation to the crafts and to the materials in common use: timber and brick. The different stylistic periods followed each other in smooth transition with buildings that were felt to be variations of the theme of the 'Danish house' rather than outstanding examples for contemporary international styles.⁴³

In this way, "functional tradition" was a key term that the editors of the *Architectural Review* in London used for the direction of contemporary architecture that they advocated.

3.5. The English Debate and the *Architectural Review*

In their January edition of 1950, the editors of the *Architectural Review* questioned the future direction of architecture in the mid-century, in which they stressed the visual quality of architecture along with its social role and the effect of the advance of technology.⁴⁴ They called attention to the urban environment, termed a "townscape," which was made up of mass-produced elements, as a phenomenon to be studied. The *Architectural Review* drew attention to the role of everyday objects and everyday experience in shaping the urban environment, in other words, the vernacular. The editors advocated the recognition of the wisdom in such a vernacular tradition, and, drawing on previous studies published in the magazine, promoted the approach to the everyday landscape in the spirit of *sharawadgi*.⁴⁵ The editors then defined their view of "functional tradition."

First of all, since we are dealing with anonymous tradition in architecture, it is necessary to make a clear distinction between peasant art—an unsophisticated expression of the instinct to ornament for ornamentation's sake—and functional art. It is the latter—a fundamental approach to design that embodies a constant creative challenge—with which the following pages are concerned and which gives the examples illustrated on them their relevance to contemporary architecture.

Today we are attempting consciously to design things in terms of the most suitable materials, processes and performance standards to satisfy one or several specific functions. The same principles, unexpressed, have unconsciously controlled the forms evolved by countless generations of blacksmiths, masons, wheelwrights, millwrights, and shipwrights. This is the Functional Tradition. This is the living tradition from which each successive generation can learn and has learned, and our generation is no exception.⁴⁶

In a way, although calling attention to the possibilities inherent in the everyday landscape, the *Architectural Review* nevertheless promoted an approach in which the everyday was to be classified, categorized, and then abstracted to distill a set of case studies that would benefit the direction of future architecture.

The *Architectural Review* continued to pursue this proposition of the study of the functional tradition in their subsequent issues. In the 1952 edition, J.M. Richards reiterated the notion of functional tradition, arguing that functionalism was not an invention of the 20th century. Rather, he pointed to the existence of what they called “functional tradition” that went back in history, “buildings largely conditioned by engineering requirements and deriving their architectural character—which includes considerable subtlety of effect—from the proper use of the means to hand rather the application of stylistic rules,” the examples of which include farm buildings, jetties, and lighthouses.”⁴⁷ Richards underscored the notion that functional aspects should serve as a means and not an end.⁴⁸ Following Richards’ editorial, the magazine also published an account by Alan Houghton Broderick in which the author provided an expansive survey of houses from many parts of the world, explaining their technical aspects and

the relationships between materials used with available resources and local climates.⁴⁹ Moreover, he also noted the non-physical aspects of such architecture, arguing that houses changed slowly because of their appearance, which related to indigenous values.⁵⁰

In July 1956, the *Architectural Review* revisited the notion of “functional tradition” in a series of photographic surveys by Eric de Mare. Again, the editors stated that the functional elements had “always been present in architecture,” featuring examples of de Mare’s photographs of various warehouses, docks, naval dockyards, textile factories, water mills, windmills, and a brewery. They argued that as architects had learned techniques such as those used in the construction of bridges and aqueducts from engineers in previous decades, they might as well draw lessons from anonymous industrial architecture, arguing that these buildings represented characteristics of the industrial revolution in Britain.⁵¹ They also argued that some of these examples might even further illustrate appropriate answers to practical needs that dated long before the Industrial Revolution.⁵² As Andrew Higgott has suggested, this issue reflected the convergence of the projects of de Cronin Hastings and J. M. Richards, the latter of whom, together with John Piper, had started documenting anonymous buildings and objects in 1938.⁵³

In a broader context of architectural culture in England shortly after the end of the Second World War, such a concern with “functional tradition” could be understood as a part of a larger campaign by the *Architectural Review* to influence the direction of contemporary architecture. Robert Gregory has outlined the debate in the architectural world in England during that period,⁵⁴ pointing out that Nikolaus Pevsner and J. M. Richards, using the *Architectural Review* as a medium, had switched from the advocacy

of the continental modernism of Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe to promoting the revival of the English Picturesque tradition, facilitated by influences permeated from the New Empiricism.⁵⁵ This position caused a tension between the younger and older generations of architects, since the younger generation of British architects had embraced the heroic modernism of the masters of modern architecture.⁵⁶ One should notice the privileged position enjoyed by the *Architectural Review*.⁵⁷ In the context of a position further advocated by Nikolaus Pevsner and Richards, the editorial team of the *Review*, including de Cronin Hastings, launched a campaign examining the visual qualities of an English town and “its engagement with traditional values of craftsmanship and the picturesque.”⁵⁸ Nicholas Bullock framed the position of the *Review* in terms of the anxiety over the dehumanizing aspect of contemporary architecture, in which the *Review* advocated an interest in local aspects of architecture that would address specific constraints and limitations.⁵⁹ Higgott underlined this notion further, asserting that for the editors of the *Review*, modern architecture should be developed in relation to specific values.⁶⁰ Thus, the position of the *Review* took a page from the Swedish of the New Empiricism.

In terms of the debate between the established critics at the *Review* and the younger generation of British architects, Reyner Banham outlined the polemical battle between the defenders and the opponents of the picturesque in the early 1950s, which pitted senior figures such as J. M. Richards and Pevsner, who previously introduced the modern movement in architecture of the continent, against the younger generations, who, having embracing such a movement in architecture, were frustrated by the revival of the English picturesque.⁶¹ In a way, Banham pointed out, this battle was complicated by the political connotation in terms of the influence of William Morris’ adoption of English Marxism, which seemed to explain Swedish influences in the form of the New

Empiricism, which reflected the tone of welfare-state architecture. The crux of the argument was that the anti-picturesque buildings of Le Corbusier and Mies were examples of rational architecture, with their classical contents, such as symmetry, geometry, and axuality, and posed them against the empiricism of the picturesque.⁶² Furthermore, Joan Ockman pointed out that, in the context of Britain of the late 1940s and the early 1950s, the term “humanism” carried a double meaning, relating to efforts both to make architecture more in tune with the needs of human beings and to connote it to the principles of classicism, which seemed to take antagonistic positions.⁶³ Pevsner and the editors of the *Architectural Review* celebrated the New Empiricism as “an undogmatic, psychologically expressive, naturalistic, and commonsensical interpretation of modern architecture.”⁶⁴ On the other hand, as Ockman asserted, young British architects, including Alison and Peter Smithson, Banham, Colin Rowe, Alan Colquhoun, and James Stirling, defined the notion of “new humanism,” which leaned more toward classicism. Examples of their view, among others, were the publication of Rowe’s “The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa” and the completion of the Hunstanton School, a Smithsons design that exemplified influences from Miesian classicism. In essence, this group represented a polemical reaction against the revival of the picturesque, viewed as a representation of the English habits of “compromise and sentimentality,” and bearing a “romantic and chauvinistic” tendency.⁶⁵ This revivalism, by and large, was felt to have been influenced by New Empiricism. Such an argument leveled against Richards and Pevsner, in Gregory’s view, seemed to be slightly unfair, in which Gregory noted the commitment from Erik Gunnar Asplund, Paulsson, J. M. Richards, and Pevsner to the modern movement from the 1930s. Indeed, Gregory further argued that these figures aimed at a particular development of modern architecture in relationship to different locales.⁶⁶

In fact, the *Review* had already embarked on coverage of Swedish architecture earlier in their 1943 issue. The definitive point, however, came with their proclamation of a new trend from the northern countries in the June 1947 issue, christened as the New Empiricism. In the introduction, the editors stated that Swedish architecture exemplified an attitude in which, “(t)he tendency is, rather, both to humanize the theory on its aesthetic side and to get back to the earlier rationalism on the technical side. ... the effort to humanize the aesthetic expression of functionalism is open to many interpretation. ... The New Empiricism. Briefly, they explain it as the attempt to be more objective than the functionalists, and to bring back another science, that of psychology, into the picture.”⁶⁷ In this sense, to reiterate Ockman’s suggestion, the term “humanize” bore an emphasis on human needs, in both physical and non-physical terms. To underscore such a definition, the editors then quoted a statement from the Swedish architect Sven Bacstrom:

The years passed, and one ‘objective’ house after the other stood ready for use. It was then that people gradually began to discover that ‘the new objectivity’ was not always so objective, and the houses did not always function so well as had been expected. They also felt the lack of many of the aesthetic values and the little contributions to coziness that we human beings are so dependent upon, and that our architectural and domestic tradition had nevertheless developed. It was difficult to settle down in the new houses because the ‘new’ human beings were not so different from the older ones ... One result of this growing insight was a reaction against all the too-schematic architecture of the 1930s. Today we have reached to the point where all the elusive psychological factors have again begun to engage our attention. Man and his habits, reactions and needs are the focus of interest as never before. To interpret such a programme as a reaction and a return to something that is past and to pastiche is definitely to misunderstand the development of architecture of this country.⁶⁸

The editorial was followed by three examples of contemporary houses in Sweden, those of Sven Markelius, Sture Frolen, and Ralph Erskine, which demonstrated a rational and functional arrangement in their plans, sensitivity to the site in terms of light, and the use of traditional materials.

The *Review* continued its proposition of the New Empiricism in early 1948. In the January issue of that year, Eric de Mare outlined the characteristics of the new approach.

What are the characteristics of this so-called New Empiricism?

In general it is a reaction against too rigid formalism. The first excitement of structural excitement has gone and then there is a return to workaday common sense. ... The Swedish temperament is a compromise between Teuton and Anglo-Saxon. German mechanical perfectionism and love of abstractions is balanced by British individualism and earthly practicality, and now the balance, in architecture at least, is moving towards the common-sense end of see-saw. Why, they ask, make windows larger than necessary just to show that we can create a wall of entirely glass? Why flat roofs when they always start to leak in the spring? Why avoid traditional materials when they do their job well and provide pleasant texture and colour at the same time? Why eschew fantasy and decoration for which, in our hearts, we long?

Planning has become much freer and far less concerned with the patterns and paper than with the reality. Fenestration, too, is freer and windows occur at places and of the sizes which needs dictate and as the pattern pleases. Indigenous materials are used both inside and out, especially brick and timber. In domestic work coziness is coming back and there is tendency among the more sophisticated at any rate to mix furniture of different styles in Sharawag manner.

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In this manner, de Mare stressed the particularity of British environment, emphasizing the specific characteristics of the local milieu. By mentioning the term “common-sense,” de Mare referred to the tendency that would be elaborated in the 1950s in terms of the “functional tradition,” which made references to everyday scenes. As Gregory pointed out, the Swedes provided a catalyst for the arguments of the *Review*.⁷⁰ The points made by de Mare were obviously shared by other in the *Review*, including Richards.⁷¹ In this way, the editors of the *Review* considered the New Empiricism not as a rebuttal to functionalism such as it might be being promoted on the continent, but rather as an attempt to bring human dimensions to such a movement.⁷²

3.6. The Picturesque and Architecture of Garden

A third dimension proposed by the *Review*, besides “the functional tradition” and the New Empiricism, was the philosophy of the “townscape,” which was a development of the theory of the picturesque. A “townscape” was defined as “the art of giving visual coherence and organization to the jumble of building, streets, and spaces that make up the urban environment,” which, along with the adoption of the New Empiricism, articulated “the virtue of the national vernacular,” in reference to the arts and crafts movement, and “the humanistic tendencies, in the sense of humane as opposed to the classical abstraction.”⁷³ In December 1949, de Cronin Hastings, writing under the pseudonym of I. de Wolfe in the *Review*, suggested a strategy to deal with and to organize varieties of elements found in the built environment by turning to the theory of the picturesque. He stated that such an English approach

...nourish(ed) itself instead upon the embodied, the differentiated, the phenomenal world as opposed to the noumenal world of the German romantic. English artists, it is asserted, have shown inclination throughout the styles and the centuries to treat life objectively and empirically and in the eighteenth century under the war cry *irregular* (meaning ‘let’s have more character,’ i.e. significant differentiation) this urge was brought into consciousness and tricked out into the philosophy we know as Picturesque Theory.⁷⁴

Such a project would lead to the production of a set of case studies. In fact, the *Review* engaged this project in subsequent editions, undertaken by Gordon Cullen, who produced a series of eye-catching visual studies. Cullen, in turn, produced a book called *Townscape*, which articulated his theory of the design of the built environment based on two primary concerns: the motion of the human body and a series of planned scenerios that foregrounded juxtapositions of contrasts.⁷⁵ Gregory noted that the Theory of Townscape derived its views from that of Camillo Sitte, foregrounding a visual narrative—tightly controlled and juxtaposing various elements in the built environment—

that unraveled through circulation routes.⁷⁶ Such a theory obviously also bore the influence of the picturesque. The *Review's* advocacy of the picturesque and the Theory of Townscape culminated in the proposal for the Festival of Britain.⁷⁷

These discussions in the *Architectural Review* raise the prominence of the notion of the Theory of the Picturesque, which is obviously a very broad subject. Following this line of thought, this chapter attempts to particularly understand the way such a notion was understood in architectural discussions in mid- twentieth century England. In 1947, Nikolaus Pevsner delivered a speech at the RIBA in which he elaborated the relationship between the notion of the picturesque and architecture.⁷⁸ He highlighted the basic qualities of the picturesque according to Sir Uvedale Price: roughness, variations, intricacy, irregularity, and piquancy. Such criteria, in Price's view, relied on techniques of visual manipulation centering on varied ways of concealment and revealing. Following a brief examination of the notions of the picturesque in landscape and town planning, which included references to prominent figures in the picturesque such as Sir Joshua Reynolds and Richard Payne Knight, Pevsner proposed a set of criteria for the notion of picturesque in architecture, which included free grouping, varied heights, asymmetry, building blocks in three dimensions, surface, roughness and smoothness of texture, and the play of light and shadows. Later on, Pevsner, in advocating the notion of the New Empiricism, would become embroiled in a debate with younger generations of British architects. In 1954, he wrote a piece in the *Architectural Review* in which he drew a parallel between the notion of the picturesque to the underlying thoughts in the work of Le Corbusier in terms of the free grouping of masses, the use of mixtures of materials and shapes, and an emphasis on the interaction between the landscape and buildings.⁷⁹ In this piece, the views of Pevsner referred to Uvedale Price and Payne Knight, stressing that such variation and irregularity could be produced only by careful

planning.⁸⁰ Relating the Theories of the Picturesque and that of Townscape, Pevsner drew attention to ordinary objects in the built environment and to the characteristics of each site. Referring to Paul Nash, Pevsner also argued that the major lesson from the picturesque was the need to pay attention to the particular characters of each locale.

In his lecture, Pevsner referred to the work of Christopher Hussey.⁸¹ Indeed, as John Macarthur has pointed out, Pevsner' advocacy of the picturesque was a program to continue Hussey's agenda.⁸² Hussey identified irregularity and movement, means to reveal varieties and contrast, as characteristics inherent in the notion of the picturesque in architecture. Hussey also mentioned that the notion of the picturesque was essentially tied to a suggestion from Sir Reynolds that architecture should appeal to visitors' imaginations, to be stimulated by the application of the association of ideas or the use of "novelty." Not surprisingly, Pevsner mentioned Richard Payne Knight and Sir Uvedale Price in his lecture. Payne Knight stressed the relationship of imagination and place to a sense of beauty in the eyes of the beholder⁸³ while Uvedale Price asserted that the notion of beauty resided in the characteristics of the object itself, especially in the notion of "variety" and "intricacy," which pointed to the notion of the disposition of objects that highlighted contrasts.⁸⁴ Price's thought was influenced by that of Edmund Burke, who had emphasized the role of sensation in the perception of beauty through his distinction between the beautiful, the picturesque, and the sublime. As a result of such thinking, the rise of the Romantic marked the transition from the universal and objective to the relative and subjective.⁸⁵ Such notions of novelty amplified interests in irregularities, uncommon features, and surprise.⁸⁶ The picturesque also emphasized the relationship between buildings and the landscape, in which buildings formed an integral part of the whole arrangement with the landscape. In terms of the relationship between the picturesque and architectural design, Henry Repton asserted the value of the use of

varieties of style in a building. However, J. Mordaunt Crook has pointed out that Repton's use of varieties of styles was based on the notion of "character," in which the choice of a style was based on the consideration of the intended appearance of a building.⁸⁷ Such an approach, Crook underlined, exemplified an eclectic taste rather than a tendency toward an eclectic style. Another aspect of the approach to the picturesque in architecture was the notion of form as a mnemonic device. As far back as the early eighteenth century, Joseph Addison has suggested the use of buildings in gardens as "associational devices,"⁸⁸ an idea which was furthered later by Whateley, who suggested the role of buildings in gardens as emblems or signposts.⁸⁹ Dixon Hunt has pointed to the picturesque use of buildings such as ruins as a medium to stimulate viewers' imaginations.⁹⁰

This section is not intended as an elaboration of the notion of the picturesque. However, it serves to underline aspects of the picturesque that are pertinent to the overall discussion of the influences in Bawa architecture. The emphasis of the picturesque on pictorial effects, aimed at stimulating viewers' imagination, is a clear representation of his work. Buildings, considered a part of the whole arrangement that articulated the intentions of the designer, act as mnemonic devices, elements that provide hints to viewers that they should engage their minds. Such arrangements rely on an apprehension of the design in motion. Along this line of argument, Bawa's interest in the garden and in English country houses seems to be a significant aspect in this discussion.⁹¹ In my analysis in the previous chapter, I have outlined Bawa's strong preference for careful organization of vistas and the understanding of a building through motion. As evidence of these features, the role of Lunuganga, Bawa's own garden, looms large. The continuous design of the garden suggests that Bawa used his garden as the testing grounds on which he elaborated his approach to architecture.⁹² At one

point in his book on Lunuganga, Bawa mentioned that one of the most exciting moments in the creation of the garden was the opening of this vista.⁹³

Such a strategy carries an aim of heightening an experience:

For many years the garden had grown gradually into a place of many moods, the result of many imaginings, some simple, some complex, offering me a retreat to be alone or to fellowfeel with friends, whilst an added pleasure is one of seeing and feeling the reactions to this place, from puzzlement to silence of contentment, from the remarkable comment of a friend of a friend "This would be a lovely place to have a garden!" to the words of the lorry driver who walked around the garden recently—when his brick being unloaded—and then said to me (but this is a very blessed place).⁹⁴

In this topic, Anjalendran has noted the following:

The key to Geoffrey's individual contribution to Architecture (organic) I think lies in his ability to internalize the principles of (organic) landscape gardening, which began with successful experiments in his own garden at Lunuganga, Bentota (purchased in 1948) and led him to seek a formal training in architecture.⁹⁵

Recently, Plesner also reiterated such a view:

*Geoffrey saw architecture as an extension of landscaping by other means. He wasn't interested in kitchens or toilets or foundations or any of that, but had a fantastic sense of space and planting and a very sure visual talent.*⁹⁶

In terms of the role of the picturesque, J. M. Richards accentuated the qualities of the choreography of vistas.⁹⁷ The same man who has championed the return to vernacular traditions and the theory of the picturesque for the directions of the contemporary architect in the *Architectural Review* in the 1940s and the 1950s argues that Bawa's architecture, borrowing from the landscape tradition, is essentially based on the notion of the choreography of views.⁹⁸

3.7. Bawa and the Architectural Association School

Bawa himself spent a good part of his life in Europe in the late 1940s and the mid-1950s. He studied at the Architectural Association School of Architecture (AA) between 1954 and 1957, starting at the Third-Year level.⁹⁹ This stage in his life might have provided other hints in the development of Bawa's architectural approaches. An examination of the trends and tendencies at the AA in the 1950s and a survey on the work of AA students at the undergraduate level in the 1950s reveal the approaches to the designs and interests that prevailed at the school.¹⁰⁰ Most of the projects exemplified a strong tendency to use of geometry and to establish clarity of order. David Gray, examining work of the class of 1952, assessed the extent of the influence of continental ideas among the AA students by noting the attitudes among the students that exhibited optimism, a belief in architecture as a social and physical instrument for reconstruction, and by discussing the influences of Corbusier's urbanism.¹⁰¹ Student projects demonstrated a utopian persuasion, reflecting the optimism of the era. It envisaged a hierarchical system covering the town and the countryside. He also noted that the development within the school took the form of an effort to Anglicize such influences, in which drawings were intended to inform rather than to seduce viewers.

The assessment of the work of students in the mid-1950s by Alvin Boryarski referred to a tendency toward pragmatism in terms of the use of minimal spaces and traditional materials and construction methods, such as brick walls and timber frames.¹⁰² However, Boryarski made a more important observation, articulating the diversity of thought at the AA, in which he stated that "the work represented is non-doctrinaire, making little reference on the one hand to the mainstream modern of Corb, Mies, and Aalto, except in quotations, or on the other to the metaphysics of the Warburg Institute, where German émigrés were dazzling the natives with symbolic interpretations of

idealistic geometries and providing meaning in architecture for everyday use.”¹⁰³ These notions of diversity were amplified further by John Miller, in which he author pointed to a late 1950’s classification of trends at the AA given by its principal: exploratory 1929, horizontal 1933, mechanical sociological 1939, Swedish humanistic 1945, curtain wall 1953, and Brutalist 1957.¹⁰⁴ Such a classification, he asserted, obviously oversimplified reality, in which at any given time different ideas come into play at the same time. However, he alluded to the reaction against “social empiricism which was thought to be sentimental, modeled on a blend of Scandinavian precedent and rural nostalgia, and sustained latterly by technological innovation and justified by a diluted Marxist programme.”¹⁰⁵ This statement conformed to Banham’s elaboration of the criticism of the anti-picturesque, articulating an interest in the New Empiricism combined with an allegiance to the ideas of Morris.¹⁰⁶

Miller pointed out that stimulus for the AA studios originated from ideas originating in 1920s and 1930s Europe in an eclectic manner. He asserted that between 1951 and 1956, the work of Frank Lloyd Wright provided a major inspiration, generated particularly from his Prairie Houses and the use of natural materials. However, he continued that by the fourth and fifth year studios, Wrightian influences had receded to secondary elements and traces of Corbusier and Aalto appeared in the use of “asymmetrical butterfly roofs and the random arrangements of mullions and transoms in the fenestration between expressed cross walls.”¹⁰⁷ Having outlined the diversity of influences at the AA, Miller argued with that the designation of 1957 as the era of the Brutalists, the AA ignored such a milieu. He asserted that the term “Brutalist” referred to an ethical stance that sought to re-establish architectural principles from the pre-war era in Europe. The term also referred to a style that featured a prominence of mass and “the use of ungirt materials and craft techniques disposed frequently in a fragmentary

way.”¹⁰⁸ Thus, he concluded that Brutalism in the late 1950s reined in the AA in the latter sense.

Obviously, during the time that Bawa spent at the AA, the school was a place where many of the young architects engaged in debates in advocating and arguing against the theories of the picturesque. Those architects included figures such as Peter and Alison Smithson, Colin St. John Wilson, and Alan Colquhoun. Indeed, as Banham noted, the journal of the school was a vehicle that allowed these young architects to engage the *Review* in a public debate beginning in 1953.¹⁰⁹ As Ockman has explained, these young architects tended to lean more toward classicism, exemplified by the Hunstanton School and by the Smithsons, among others, influenced by Mies’ architecture.¹¹⁰ The Smithsons went on to lead the Brutalist movement. Ockman asserted that the Brutalists intended “to have no finishes at all internally, the building being a combination of shelter and environment. Bare brick, concrete, and wood ... had this had been built, it would have been the first exponent of the New Brutalism in England.”¹¹¹ She further pointed out that the term alluded to the raw concrete Unité d’Habitation in Marseilles, a parody of the tendency of the *Architectural Review* to label everything with the coinage “new,” and to the Smithsons’ association with the major movements of the 1950s, namely “the social-anthropological interests of Team 10, the Independent Group’s preoccupations with spontaneous, non-formal sources of design, and the vitalist aesthetics of art brut.”¹¹² The Brutalists showed a particular interest in materials, which they saw as carrying the possibility of expressing particularities of a design and sensibilities to a site.¹¹³ Furthermore, as Bullock has pointed out, the Hunstanton School enshrined the younger architects’ enthusiasm for engaging in the development of the Modern Movement, inspired by the heroic works of the 1920s and

the 1930s and focused on the relationships between the Modern Movement and classical architecture.¹¹⁴

The anti-picturesque camp, however, had its own dynamic that led to shifts in their approaches. As Banham lamented in 1968, these young architects were fighting a lost cause, reflected in the lack of coherence in their body of ideas, such as the rejection by the Smithsons of proportion and symmetry, replaced by their acceptance of an organization based on function and circulation.¹¹⁵ The Smithsons eventually moved on from references to Mies' classicism.¹¹⁶ Banham also pointed to the evolution in Le Corbusier's work, a revered figure to these young architects, exemplified in Notre Dame du Haut at Ronchamps, which departed from the obsession with primary geometry.¹¹⁷ Assessing the anti-picturesque camp, Banham observed that, by the 1960s, their theoretical approaches had eventually absorbed an English notion of sensibility to the site, hence, the title of his article, that is, "The Revenge of the Picturesque."¹¹⁸

Bawa spent his fourth year at the AA under the direction of studio master John Killick. The design brief that the latter provided for the studio stated that the program was based on the CIAM meeting at La Sarraz, which had established the theme of the habitat.¹¹⁹ He further stated that the focus of the problem was on the character of the design, given that the site was surrounded by good examples of Georgian and Victorian architecture. However, the students also had to address issues such as the integration of plans and sections, the relationships between services and structure, and the coordination between pedestrian and vehicular access. In response, Bawa and his teammates Stuart Lewis and Tony Matthes produced an entry clearly exemplifying strong influences from Le Corbusier's Unite d'Habitation at Marseilles, such as those that exhibiting interlocking units in which accesses were located on every third floor, the

use of pre-cast concrete, the solidification of all units into two high rise structures, and the use of the elevated mass to free the ground (Fig. 3.3). One amusing fact of Bawa's time at the AA was that his thesis project was a hotel,¹²⁰ a type of building that would later form a major component of his important work.

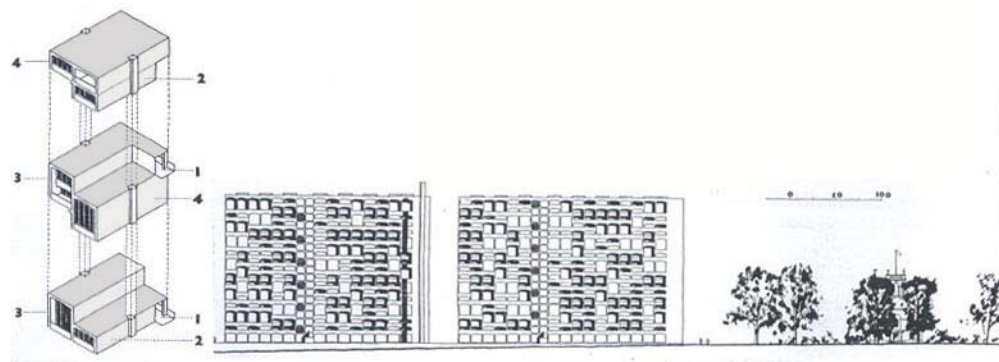


Figure 3.2: Bawa studio work, a group project with Stuart Lewis and Tony Matthews. See the emphasis on the cellular units (shaded gray) (Source: *Architectural Design*, October 1956)

Recalling his time at the AA, Bawa underscored the main lessons that he absorbed from the school.

The AA gives me a discipline, though it didn't push me in any direction, which is why it is so good. I mean people who were bad were left bad, and people who were good were not interfered with.¹²¹

The AA was splendid and it left you on your own entirely and it did not teach you anything! The School gave you the opportunity to meet intelligent people, all doing different great things. I don't think architecture can be taught; you have to learn it. At the AA they leave you alone. Occasionally, they praise you or sneer at what you have done, but they don't give you a theorem.¹²²

In a way, this assessment hints at Bawa's own experiences in the years prior to his enrollment at the AA, when he had traveled widely across Europe and other parts of the world. During these travels, he was exposed to myriad fine architectural masterpieces. However, this assessment of the culture at the AA does highlight the particular discourse in architecture that permeated thought at the school.

In this line, an examination of the direction that the AA took after the period of Bawa's education would provide another dimension to the appreciation of Bawa's architecture. From the mid-1950s, the school had engaged in attempts to set up a program in modern architecture for the tropical region. These efforts eventually led to the establishment of the Tropical Architecture Program in 1956. This program at the AA reflected a tendency among some of the British architects to develop a body of approaches in developing new, post-war architecture in the British colonies and the former colonies in Asia and Africa.¹²³ A paramount example of this tendency was the practices and publications of Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew. Fry and Drew elaborated their approaches to designing in tropical regions in which they emphasized the technical aspect of dealing with tropical climates, such as the use of lightweight materials, double roofs that are sloped in one direction, horizontal projections such as eaves and verandahs, sun breakers, and shading devices.¹²⁴ These principles could be found in the local architecture throughout tropical Asia and Africa. However, examples that they used to illustrate their approaches clearly betrayed their affinity to architecture with clean and pure geometry. Their material of preference was concrete, which also echoed the tendency in the post-war architecture of Europe and America.¹²⁵ The agenda was clear, to adapt universal architecture, that which has "international validity," to tropical climates. In this case, the adjustment was about the physical, or the mechanism in which a building reacts to tropical climate. Scientific approaches underlined the design strategy

of Drew and Fry, in which they charted specific factors associated with tropical climates and then provides a set of answers.

3.8. Exploring the Past

This interest in the humanistic side at the AA also hinted at another dimension in the relationships between Plesner and Bawa, that is, an interest in traditional environments. Recently, Plesner stated that

I was interested in historical architecture and I had taken summer courses in measuring old buildings. I had all the techniques and equipment and I fell in love with all the old buildings like Embekke and Lankatillake, and old *walauwas*. ... Grand European architecture with big columns and pretentious stuff with domes and all that which had no place in Sri Lanka. The real colonial stuff was built by engineers in the late 19th century who knew the climate and tried to build with verandahs and big roofs and who learnt from existing conditions and respected them.

At the same time I fell in love with all the traditional stuff because it was so obviously right for the climate and right for the ability of the existing craftsmen. The village *baases* knew how to build like this and could do it; and you got through ventilation; and you protected against the rain and the sun and all that. And then Minette got all excited about that too, so I think I infected her.¹²⁶

Plesner underlined his interest in the past in terms of the conformity and appropriateness of such architecture from the past to the environment of the island. Plesner also hinted at his technical and systematic contribution to approaching such an interest in the past. Plesner's interest in the past and in the ordinary built environment of the island led to his collaboration with Barbara Sansoni. The latter recalled the beginning of their collaboration, asserting that Minette de Silva had introduced Plesner to local craftsmanship and materials of the island. Indeed, as de Silva herself mentioned, her decision to relocate in the ancient city of Kandy was determined by her desire to stay in close contact with local traditions and craftsmanship.¹²⁷ Sansoni also underlined Plesner's contribution to providing systematic ways of documenting existing buildings, a skill transferred in turn to younger generations of Sri Lankan architects.¹²⁸

This enthusiasm about the past seemed to be a shared passion among people in Bawa's circle. Painter Donald Friend, who lived on the island for five years between 1957 and 1962 and was part of the social and art circles that included, among others, Geoffrey Bawa, his brother Bevis, Barbara Sansoni, and Plesner, witnessed and recorded trends and tendencies shared by these groups in his memoirs. Among the memories of his time on the island, he wrote about a series of excursions to the countryside in which they pursued arts and crafts objects that formed collections of *objets d'arts* that adorned their houses, bungalows, and gardens.¹²⁹ Friend noted their shared appreciation of antique furniture, which they sought at auctions or in the houses of villagers. He also recalled their trips to collect various objects, including statues and even wooden carvings from abandoned churches and rundown temples. The trips often turned into competitions in which they collected fragments from the past.¹³⁰ Their interests in the past covered various facets of the island, comprising objects of Sinhalese origin and the colonial period. This interest was not only fostered by the collection of objects but also by working with local craftsmen. Friend recorded his collaboration with Barbara Sansoni in which the two of them worked with local villagers to produce decorative tiles.¹³¹ The friend also recorded his encounter with Ulrik Plesner, in which he noted Plesner's enthusiasm about exploring the potential to build architecture suitable for the island nation.¹³² In later entries, Friend also recorded Plesner and Sansoni's project of documenting the architecture of the island.¹³³

Indeed, such tendencies shared among Bawa's circle of contemporaries reflected trends in the world of the arts and architecture on the island nation, the influences of which were wielded by a group of influential Sri Lankan artists formed in 1943, the 43 Group. Neville Weeraratne has provided a background in the history of art

in Sri Lanka in the first six decades of the 20th century.¹³⁴ He pointed out that the early decades of the century marked a tendency toward a concern about the condition of indigenous pictorial art, such as murals on temples, which depicted the life of the Buddha and the story of Jataka. The concern, initially raised and elaborated by leading figures such as Lionel de Fonseka and Ananda Coomaraswamy, who were worried about maintaining and preserving the murals as such products of craftsmanship faded, the monk-painter Manjusri Thero was prompted to embark on a project to document and annotate the murals. This development helps to explain the rising interest in the past arts of the island, which in turn played a significant role in the development of contemporary art in Ceylon in the early decades of the century. At that time, the world of pictorial art on the island was dominated by the Colombo Society of Art, which promoted English taste following the model of the Royal Academy.¹³⁵ This institution stimulated reactions from the younger generation of Ceylon artists in the 1920s and 1930s. Weeraratne mentioned the appearance on the scene of the Englishman Charles Freegrove Winzer, a government inspector with the Art of the Education Department of Ceylon, whose interest in the arts of the island became influential in the development of contemporary art in Ceylon, Winzer in 1920 mentioned that:

Our materials are different, our conditions are different, the demands of the public are different, and the public must be trained and enlightened by us sufficiently not only *to appreciate our work but also to that of the past* which is appreciated actually as a relics, as sign of past greatness but not out of time as works of art. But in spite of all the differences of time, of condition, of presentation, *the eternal qualities of art*, as shown in Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa, should *be studied, adapted to our life, and continuity with them achieved*. I may add that *this continuity is closer to the decorative conceptions of modern art* than to the realistic, true-to-life prettiness and cheap harmonies of academic achievement.¹³⁶

Such a statement mirrored Winzer's interest in the past. Winzer suggested the importance of the appreciation of art from the past in much the same tone as Manjusri

and Coomaraswamy. Furthermore, the past, in the form of pictorial artifacts, was seen as materials that contemporary artists should engage in. Avoiding any thought of nostalgia about the glory of the past, they believed in continuity and sought to actively transform ancient elements into relevant objects in contemporary time. Specifically, Winzer argued that attempts should be made to establish continuity in the arts, adapting them to the present time. He also recognized such art as already embodying the ideals and pure forms, the aim of modern art. In its own way, this view seemed to resonate with Picasso's interest in African masks. Besides Winzer's interest in art of the past, he also introduced reprints of works of major European painters of that time. Weeraratne also noted the significant contribution of Lionel Wendt, who brought back reproductions of new works of art from Europe and the French art magazine, *Cahiers d'Art*.¹³⁷ These exposures to new developments in pictorial art opened the eyes of aspiring young artists of the island.

Under the auspices of Wendt, these young artists finally coalesced and launched an independent group in 1943 through an exhibition that brought recognition to their attempts to create a new art.¹³⁸ This exhibition was repeated annually and even became a traveling exhibition in London and Paris in the early 1950s. Critics, including John Berger, Maurice Collis, Myfanny Piper, and Michael Middleton saw attempts to synthesize contemporary techniques with the tradition of pictorial art and daily life in Ceylon in the work of this group.¹³⁹ Weeraratne summarized the reception of critics to the group's exhibitions in London and Paris, especially noting the favorable receptions of the work of George Keyt and Justin Darayanigala, who attracted the most attention.¹⁴⁰ Darayanigala, educated in London and Paris, took a special interest in modern French writing,¹⁴¹ and George Keyt studied paintings through the tutelage of Winzer and Wendt, who introduced him to Picasso, Matisse, and Leger. Keyt also spent time visiting

Buddhist monasteries to paint pictures of the monks.¹⁴² Referring to Keyt's work, John Berger wrote that the painter gathered together elements from Picasso in Paris, Indian cave paintings at Ajanta, and the Sinhalese at Sigiriya.¹⁴³ This opinion was echoed in a special edition of *Marg* magazine, a publication devoted to contemporary art in Ceylon that considered Keyt's work an attempt to express traditional subjects from the island through contemporary techniques. In the words of the magazine, Keyt had produced something with "Oriental contents but in Western idiom."¹⁴⁴ On the work of Darayanigala, the magazine commented that the artist had borrowed from the "technique and color scheme" of Sinhalese artists.¹⁴⁵ The work of the 43 Group exemplified values shared by its members, an attitude that Weeraratne, in his introduction to the group, termed as the "belief in the inherent goodness of the country's past."¹⁴⁶

Such an appreciation of the past and ordinary life on the island reverberated within the atmosphere of the island. In the architectural scenes of the island, this appreciation was reflected in studies of Andrew Boyd, a British architect who worked in Ceylon in the late 1930s and the 1940s. In a piece published in the *Architectural Review* in 1941, Boyd suggested that peasant houses on the island provided lessons for the direction of the architecture of Ceylon.¹⁴⁷ Criticizing the metal buildings of tea plantations as well as government buildings built in various European styles, Boyd argued that peasant houses exemplified superior qualities in their simplicity, their "functional and structural directness," and their suitability to the local climate. Nonetheless, he also warned that these buildings should be used as exemplary in terms of their principles, instead of being copied. He argued that the emphasis on function, simplicity, and structure in the domestic buildings of Ceylon bore a resemblance to the development of modern architecture. In his argument, Boyd hinted at the notion of architecture that had arisen out of functional concerns in a manner similar to what

editors at the *Review* would later refer to as “functional tradition.” Similarly, Boyd’s agenda also reflected view similar to that of Winzer in painting. In the later development of architecture in Ceylon in the late 1940s, the planned campus for the future University of Ceylon (figure 3.4) had already revealed attempts to revive features of Kandyan architecture.¹⁴⁸ Further, C. Anjalendran and Rajiv Wanasundera had outlined major trends in architecture in the five decades since the independence of the island in February 1948.¹⁴⁹ They noted that the international style was introduced in 1941 in the design of the Baur’s Buildings by Egender and Muller, a Zurich-based firm that incorporated Corbusian themes such as *brise-soleil* and *maisonette* units. However, interest in the architecture of the island was also represented in the written and built work of Andrew Boyd, who, influenced by Lionel Wendt and the 43 Group, built houses that incorporated the sources of the International style and also inspiration from ordinary houses. They noted a surge of enthusiasm about the past in the years following independence, reflected in pictorial art in the work of the 43 Group and buildings such as the Independence Commemoration Monument by Wynn Jones in 1953, which referred back to the Kandyan Audience Hall, including reference to its timber frame structure and its double-pitched Kandyan roof.

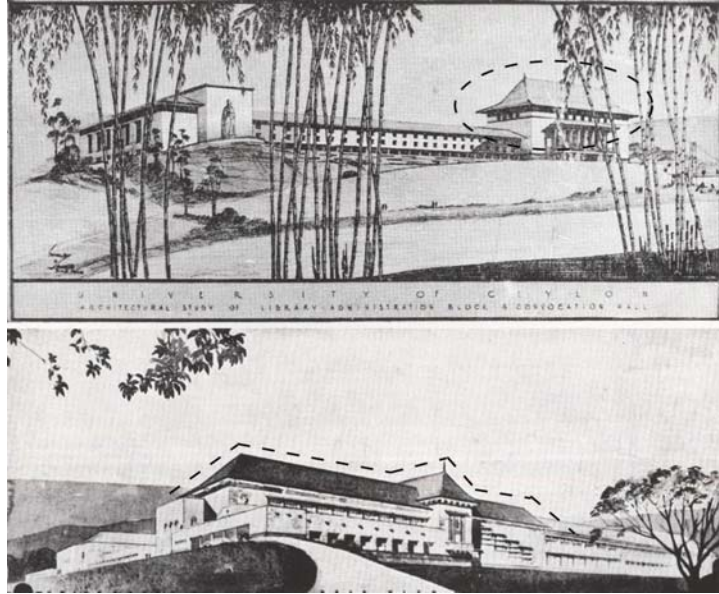


Figure 3.3: University of Ceylon, the emphasis was on the shape of the roofs (dashed lines by the author) (Source: *Marg*, Vol.3, no. 1, 1949)

At this time, a female architect, Minette de Silva, returned to Ceylon after receiving her degree from the Architectural Association and established her practice in Kandy. In her work and her writings, published with the help of her sister, who served as an editor of the Indian magazine *Marg*, the architect expressed her intention to engage the notion of bringing together local traditions and contemporary trends in architecture, an intention reflected in her decision to set up her base in Kandy.¹⁵⁰ In her series of houses in Kandy and Colombo, de Silva attempted to emphasize the careful placement of buildings on their sites, an organization of space that emphasized functionality, while also attempting to utilize the available materials on the island. However, her intention of engaging local materials was often limited to the use of crafts on the surface of buildings.¹⁵¹ In her first project, a house in Kandy (figure 3.5), the architect even employed *brise soleil* while also placing a mural of George Keyt in the building to indicate the involvement of artists and craftsmen. In the design for the C. H. Fernando

House in Welawate in 1954, de Silva emphasized the use of exposed materials, stone, brick, and wood without further finishing, such as plaster, for economic reasons. To deal with the climatic conditions, she used openings in the walls inspired by traditional air vents in the Amerasinghe House in Colpetty in 1954.

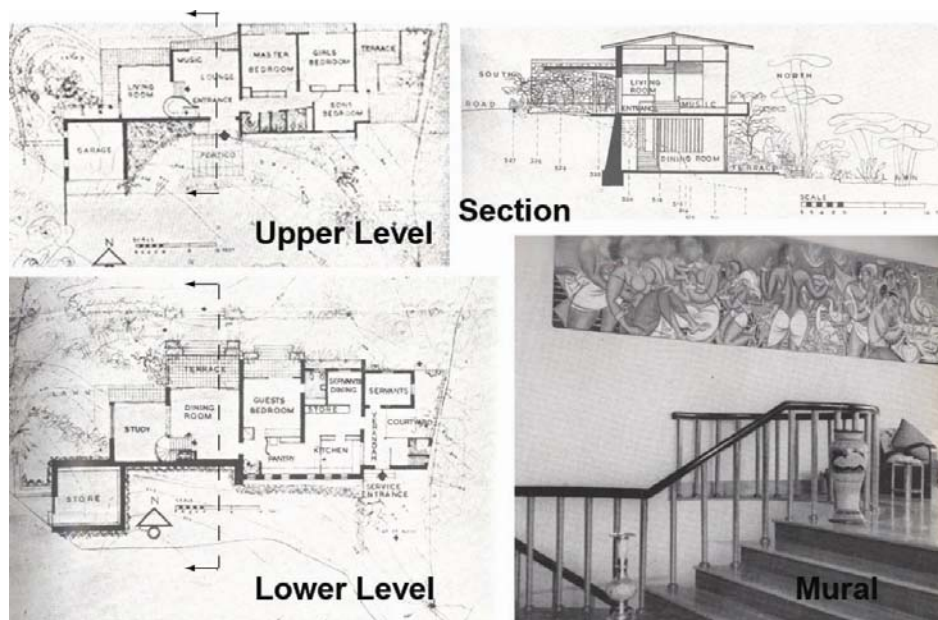


Figure 3.4: The Kandy House (Source: *Marg*, Vol. 6, no: 6, 1953)

3.9. Socio-Political Milieu: Past and Ethnic Politics in Sri Lanka

An interest in the past in the world of art and architecture of the island mirrored the resurging interest in Buddhism on the island, which had begun in the late nineteenth^h century. This awareness in religion seems to have been an early reaction against colonialism, especially its impact on the way of life and the system of education, dominated by Christian missionaries.¹⁵² Furthermore, this resurgence of interest in

Buddhism, the belief of the majority of the population, the Sinhalese, emerged as a convergence of several aspects. Nihal Perera mentioned that one of the early grievances was the loss of the patronage of the Buddhist monks and intelligentsia, who had enjoyed such a patronage—along with the prestige that accompanied it—from the elites of the Kandyan kingdom. However, due to the subjugation of the Kandyan kingdom by the British in the 1830s, such elites disappeared.¹⁵³ This situation reflected the fabric of the population of the island, made up of various groups, including the low and high caste Sinhalese, the Kandyan Sinhalese, and the lowland Sinhalese, the Ceylon and Indian Tamils, the Moors, and the Burghers. The fading influence of the Kandyan elites was exacerbated by the rise of the new elites, the low-caste Sinhalese from the lowlands whose emergence was supported by the British colonial government.¹⁵⁴ Groomed in the colonial system, these new elites, centered in Colombo and educated in English, embraced Christianity, so they obviously had little attachment to Buddhism. In this way, the problems of language, religion, and ethnicity became complex and intertwined. In reaction, the populist movement saw Ceylon as a land of the Buddhist religion and the Sinhalese as the chosen people who should guard the way of life inspired by the Buddhist teachings.¹⁵⁵

In the decades prior to independence in February 1948, the relationships between various ethnic and sub-ethnic groups tended to be mild, reflecting situations in which each group endeavored to secure a favorable relationship with the colonial government. However, that situation would change in the aftermath of February 1948, when, for the first time, the Sinhalese majority gained the upper hand in the affairs of the island. Prior to independence, the Buddhist movements, mostly organized and represented by high-caste Sinhalese from the Kandyan region, were limited to social and religious movements. After independence, the Buddhist movement rapidly turned into a

political movement, signified by the emergence of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), led by S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike in 1952.¹⁵⁶ Ethnic issues came to the fore, and the SLFP, exploiting the issue of “Sinhala only” by promising to declare Sinhalese the only national language, won the election in 1957.¹⁵⁷ K. M. de Silva noted that the language issue, and the issue of religion that entailed, was crucial because it related not only to the conception of the identity of the Sinhalese in particular and Ceylon in general, but also to the perception among the Sinhalese intelligentsia that they were excluded because of their inability to speak English.¹⁵⁸ Another dimension of the significant change brought by the watershed election of 1957 was that class relationships had changed. Michael Roberts, Ismeth Raheem, and Percy Colin-Thome noted that the result of the 1957 election was a victory of the underprivileged, majority section, the Buddhist Sinhalese, over the privileged English-speaking constituents.¹⁵⁹ Although Bandaranaike made a concession to the Tamils in terms of his language policy, his widow—who came to power shortly after his assassination—quickly implemented the “Sinhalese-only” policy in 1960.

De Silva has argued that, in the first decade after independence, the conception of Sri Lanka shifted from a multi-racial, diverse polity to an ethnocentric view equating Ceylon with the majority of the population, the Sinhalese.¹⁶⁰ The former conception of Sri Lanka was the vision of the founding fathers of the island nation at its inception in 1948. However, as de Silva asserted, such a conception was an elitist view that failed to be disseminated to the majority of the population. Instead, the ethnic-centered conception of Ceylon gained the upper hand, in which every political party on the island gradually subscribed to that vision. In reaction, the minority, especially the Tamils, also resorted to such an idea of ethnic-based politics as the answer to the rising Sinhalese dominance. In the 1960s, such a socio-political division based on ethnicity, defined by

language and religion, became stronger. In the context of Sinhalese-centered nationalism, the island would undergo changes from a commonwealth to a republic, along with the change from the name Ceylon to Sri Lanka in 1972, which hinted at a stronger grip of the Sinhalese.¹⁶¹ As de Silva noted:

In Sinhalese the words for nation, race and people are practically synonymous and a multi-racial or multi-communal nation or state is incomprehensible to the popular mind. The emphasis on the sense of uniqueness of the Sinhalese past, and the focus on Sri Lanka as the land of the Sinhalese and the country in which Buddhism stood forth in its purest form, carried an emotional appeal compared with which a multi-racial polity was a meaningless abstraction. ... Sinhala nationalism was consciously or unconsciously treated as being identical with a Sri Lankan nationalism.¹⁶²

The notion of identity took a nostalgic dimension in which the Sinhalese tried to revive memories of ancient glories.¹⁶³ The history of the ancient Buddhist kingdoms came to the fore to perpetuate the narrative of the primary role of the Sinhalese on the island, such as those of the ancient kingdom of Annuradhapura and Kotte.¹⁶⁴

One facet of Bawa's life was the fact that he was a part of the Burgher community on the island. Roberts, Raheem, and Colin-Thome have provided insights into the mentality of the Sri Lankan Burghers. With regard to the transition period in the 1950s and 1960s, the authors argued that the Burghers embraced the notion of a Ceylon as a multi-ethnic society, in contrast to the communal views of the Sinhalese and the Tamils.¹⁶⁵ Hence, they argued, the Burghers saw themselves as Ceylonese, subscribing to the conception of Ceylonese nationalism vis-à-vis Sinhalese nationalism. Underlying this position was a contrast in different world views, which alluded to issues such as transcendental ethnicity, communalism, and caste-oriented societies.¹⁶⁶ Indeed, the Burghers of Sri Lanka had played an instrumental role in the development of Ceylonese nationalism from the mid-nineteenth century. As Roberts, Raheem, and

Colin-Thome elaborated, Burgher intelligentsias in the 1840s and 1850s sought to promote an idea of the Ceylonese as a common identity that would surpass the various ethnic identities of people who called the island their home.¹⁶⁷ Such a conception arose as a reaction against the attitude and prejudice of the British colonial administration, which had differentiated themselves from the people of the island and categorized their subjects into different ethnic groups and castes, one of which was the Burgher.¹⁶⁸ In this way, the authors suggested that the Burghers had provided leadership in the construction of the patriotic identity of the island, combined with cultural programs, which, in hindsight, reflected their beliefs in their role as pioneers.¹⁶⁹ However, in the course of the next hundred years until independence, the Burghers were still a highly privileged, minority group that enjoyed close relationships with the British Administration and had exceptional access to advantages such as higher education, economic opportunities, and occupational access to the administration. Such a privileged condition, Roberts et al. assessed, provided a sense of security that marginalized the Burghers, excluding them from the political dynamics in the decades before independence, represented by the steady development of the movements of the Sinhalese and other minorities.¹⁷⁰ In a way, the study suggested that the Burgher middle class of Ceylon, as a part of their historical legacy, maintained the conception of the multi-ethnic Ceylon identity. However, in the 1950s, they argued that such a conception had become instrumental in maintaining their position on the island in the face of a surge of communal identities that had been epitomized in the language and religious policies.¹⁷¹

Such an assessment, however, is not intended to paint Bawa as a part of the deliberate identity politics of the Burghers of Sri Lanka. Indeed, Bawa's attitude throughout his life can be described as apolitical at best, if not indifferent. Instead, this section aims to help explain and clarify his view of the island. Born in an elite Burgher

family and enjoying numerous privileges and opportunities in his life, including education abroad, Bawa held an attitude of a Burgher, argued in this dissertation, that upheld the notion of multi-ethnic Ceylonese and that reverberated strongly in Bawa's world view.

Thus, interest in the past in Sri Lanka took two different directions. On the one hand, it served as a nostalgic longing that fueled the development of an ethnic-centered definition of identity of Sri Lanka. Such a view, couched in very exclusive terms that equated the island nation with the majority of the population, was understood in the close intertwining of language and religion. On the other hand, interest in the past provided a creative impetus for the circles of artists and architects of the island.¹⁷² One could argue that such circles belonged to the elite of the island. Less attached to nostalgia and sectarian sentimentality, these people tended to see things from the past as materials to be studied and adapted to the prevailing conditions.

Another significant factor in the political landscape on the island was the changes in economic policies. In the early years after independence, the government continued a system inherited from the British in which economic prosperity largely depended on plantations.¹⁷³ However, drops in the prices of plantation products hurt the economy of the country. At the same time, the Buddhist movement adopted a more populist direction that gradually moved the control of the economy to the state, leading to, among other things, the nationalization of private enterprise.¹⁷⁴ In the 1960s, with the country aligned more with the Eastern bloc, such a direction became more institutionalized. The downside of such an economic policy was the scarcity of goods, which affected many aspects of life on the island.¹⁷⁵ Such a condition obviously affected the construction industry and, eventually, architecture itself. Plesner hinted at the relative ease of obtaining building materials in his early years on the island, a condition that would soon

change.¹⁷⁶ As mentioned in the previous chapter, when the new United National Party (UNP) regime came to power in 1977, the direction of the economic policy of the island changed again as the Jayewardana regime loosened state control and steered the country towards a free economy. The private sector was allowed greater freedom to enter various sectors previously controlled by the state. Such a shift was a backdrop to the Heritance Hotel project.¹⁷⁷ A point worth considering in this light was the degree to which such an economic climate from the late 1950s to the late 1970s may have influenced Bawa's architecture. The dynamics of the political and economic spheres on the island from the 1950s to the 1970s provided conditions that encouraged Bawa to explore materials and building techniques available locally on the island.

3.10. Concluding Remarks

This chapter has attempted to map out the various direct and indirect factors that may have influenced Bawa's life in an effort to reconstruct the generative aspects that formed Bawa's various approaches to architecture. It suggests that such approaches were the manifestation of basic intentions that underlie Bawa's architecture. The previous chapter indicated that an analysis should rest on the argument of consistency in his architecture. This analysis, therefore, proceeds in a centripetal fashion by examining the individuals and circumstances closest to Bawa during his life as an architect and then proceeding toward larger influences in his life, particularly the social and cultural milieu of the island.

In this context, an assessment of the influence that Plesner asserted over Bawa can be understood in terms of the prevailing tendencies toward humanistic characteristics, in the English sense, of New Empiricism, such as those that had

appeared in the works of Kay Fisker in Denmark. Bawa and Plesner also seem to have shared a concern about the practicality of the structures that they designed. Such a concern suggests an approach that involved an understanding of “humanistic” architecture in the way Pevsner and his peers defined such the term. However, a clearer indication of the generative influences of the development of Bawa’s architectural vocabulary may have been gleaned from his conception of the architecture of gardens. A resemblance to New Empiricism also appeared in his attention to the everyday architecture and landscape of the island, in which the architect, inspired by various references, freely drew in a diachronic manner. Such references, from historical sources, or past architecture, stand side-by-side with the consideration of contemporary building practice on the island.

His architecture also provides a commentary on the shifting tendencies in the construction of the identity of Sri Lanka. It reflects, in its own way, the shared concerns among artists and the intelligentsia on the island about the relationship between heritage and tradition on the island and the advances of the contemporary world. However, in the larger context of the social, cultural, and political milieu on the island, in contrast to the nostalgic and exclusive redefinition of the Sri Lankan identity, his architecture reflects the essence of the island as a intersection between the various island cultures over the centuries, such as the Arabs, the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the British, as well as the indigenous Sinhalese and Tamils.

Notes to Chapter 3:

¹ Anjalendran, C., *Letter to Dr. Lewcock*, Sept. 11th, 1985, retrieved from Dr. Lewcock's archives.

² "Bawa clear-sighted, unprejudiced view of the architecture of the island, which was traditionally made up of Buddhist simplicity in the rural and religious buildings and of colonial practicality in the urban architecture, was exactly matched by Plesner's devotion to the new empiricists' code of welding onto modern architecture a humanist use of local materials and forms." (Lewcock, Ronald, "Profile-Geoffrey Bawa" (English translation), *Arradamento Dekorasyon* (Turkey) (June 1992)). Dr. Lewcock mentioned this idea in several discussions

³ Plesner, Ulrik, "Ulrik Plesner," *Living Architecture: Scandinavian Design*, Issue 5, (1986), 84

⁴ Plesner, "If there was Bawa there was Plesner," Interview with Deepali Modi and Ashok Ferey," *The SundayTimes Plus, Sunday*, February 17, 2008, 7.

⁵ Faber, Tobias, *A History of Danish Architecture*, (Copenhagen: Danske selskab in cooperation with the American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1963), 145.

⁶ *ibid.*, 165.

⁷ "My stepfather ... took me with him to the site, and my earliest memories are of climbing scaffolding up and around the domes," Plesner, "If there was Bawa there was Plesner: Interview with Deepali Modi and Ashok Ferey," 1.

⁸ "One of the things in Denmark was that all public work went to competition. All schools, churches, libraries—anything that was a public building and most public housing—went to competition." *Ibid.*, 1.

⁹ Faber, Tobias, *New Danish Architecture*, (New York: Frederick A Praeger, Inc. Publishers, 1968), 14-15

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 18. Also, Plesner stresses this point further, "That was how all young architects got established. That's how they got work." Plesner, "If there was Bawa there was Plesner," 1.

¹¹ Atkinson, G. Anthony, "Technique, Training and Practice in Danish Architecture", *Architecture of Denmark*, (London: The Architectural Press, 1949), 22.

Also, Plesner recalls of his time in school, "After the war, I went to the Royal Academy in Copenhagen. It was all based on craft—half of the students were carpenters and bricklayers, the other half just passed out of high school. You got a mix of craftsmen and academics, very fruitful." (Plesner, "If there was Bawa there was Plesner," 1).

¹² Atkinson, "Technique, Training and Practice in Danish Architecture," 22.

¹³ *ibid.*, 22.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, 24.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, 22.

¹⁶ Faber, *New Danish Architecture*, 26.

¹⁷ Conversation with Anura Ratnavibhushana, Colombo, December 19th, 2006.

¹⁸ Donnelly, Marian C., *Architecture in the Scandinavian Countries*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1992), 300.

¹⁹ Atkinson, "Technique, Training and Practice in Danish Architecture," 21.

²⁰ Faber, *New Danish Architecture*, 6.

²¹ *ibid.*, 6.

²² *ibid.*, 6.

²³ Hiort, Esbjorn, *Contemporary Danish Architecture*, (Copenhagen:Jul. Gjellerups Forlag, 1949), 9.

²⁴ Faber, *New Danish Architecture*, 8-10.

²⁵ Faber, *A History of Danish Architecture*, 166-8.

²⁶ Faber, *A History of Danish Architecture*, 185-6; Faber, Tobias *New Danish Architecture*, 10

²⁷ Ockman, J., (ed.), *Architecture Culture 1943-1968: A documentary anthology*, (New York: Columbia Book of Architecture/Rizzoli, 1993), 52.

²⁸ Faber, *A History of Danish Architecture*, 185-6.

²⁹ *ibid.*, 186-7. See also Hiort's assessment of the campus, who stated that the campus was planned and designed at the aftermath of the Stockholm exhibition in which "the new efficiency" was the catch-phrase of the day. "... it was no small thing to plan a building which, on a clearly functional basis, recreated the best traditions of medieval building: - strong material unity combined with clarity and simplicity of design. These buildings have had with the passage of time great influence of newer architecture." Hiort, *Contemporary Danish Architecture*, 20.

³⁰ "In the design of the library we find again the simplicity of profile so characteristics of Aarhus University and it can hardly be wrong to see in this direct influence. It is quite interesting to see how well this simple and traditional type of building—the long, low wing with windows spaced at regular intervals—can embody an entirely modern and rational plan. The severe outward form has nowhere interfered with the inner function of the building; the rooms are well-

formed and well-lighted and there are no corridors or odd nooks and corners to incommode internal traffic." Hior, *Contemporary Danish Architecture*, 30. The library was also mentioned in Faber, *A History of Danish Architecture*, 189.

³¹ Faber, *A History of Danish Architecture*, 199; Faber, *New Danish Architecture*, 12.

³² Faber, *New Danish Architecture*, 12-14. Also reiterated in Faber, *A History of Danish Architecture*, 205, underlining the tendencies to achieve a high quality in terms of craftsmanship, notwithstanding the styles.

³³ Faber, *A History of Danish Architecture*, 204.

³⁴ Anderson, Stanford, "The 'New Empiricism—Bay Region Axis': Kay Fisker and Postwar debates in Functionalism, Regionalism, and Monumentality," *Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol. 50, no. 3 (February 1997), 197-207.

³⁵ *ibid.*, 197.

³⁶ *ibid.*, 197.

³⁷ *ibid.*, 197.

³⁸ *ibid.*, 197. On new Monumentality, the *Architectural Review* seems to promote a rejection, in which monumentality, including elements such as Classical porticoes of the Swedish grace, was seen as anti-democratic as it symbolized 'the small dictators of our era: bankers and politicians. See Gregory, Robert, "Heroism versus Empiricism (an extract from a thesis presented to Bath University in 1996)," *The Architectural Review*, Vol. 207, no. 1235 (January 2000), 68-73.

³⁹ "[The quote from the AR, June 1947, showed that, although these comments relate to Sweden and its less disrupted architectural development on the war years, the thrust of the argument could also apply to the thought and production of Kay Fisker, a leading Danish architect." Anderson, "The 'New Empiricism—Bay Region Axis': 198.

⁴⁰ Faber, *A History of Danish Architecture*, 192, 196.

⁴¹ Faber, *New Danish Architecture*, 20.

⁴² Quoted from Fisker, "Moral of Functionalism," *Magazine of Arts* 43/2, (Feb. 1950), 66 (Anderson, "The 'New Empiricism—Bay Region Axis': 202).

⁴³ Faber, *New Danish Architecture*, 6.

⁴⁴ "The Functional Tradition," *The Architectural Review*, Vol. 107, no. 637 (January 1950): 3. see also Higgott, Andrew, *Mediating Modernism: architectural cultures in Britain* (London: Routledge, 2007) 99-100, in which the author pointed out to the editors concerns toward the visual qualities and the greater emphasis on technology, rather than on the design skill on the development of the built environment.

⁴⁵ "The Functional Tradition," 5.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁷ Richards, J.M., "The Next Step," *The Architectural Review*, Vol. 107, no. 639, (1952): 168.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, 168.

⁴⁹ Brodrick, Alan Houghton, "Grass Roots: Huts, igloos, wigwams and other sources of the Functional Tradition," *The Architectural Review*, Vol. 115, no. 686 (February 1954): 102-5, 111.

⁵⁰ "House-types change very slowly, not only because buildings have to be, in some measure at least, adapted to climate, but also because 'the look' of a house is part and parcel of man's private world." *Ibid.*, 111.

⁵¹ "The Functional Tradition," *The Architectural Review*, Vol. 122, no. 726 (July 1957): 6.

⁵² *ibid.*, 7.

⁵³ Higgott, Andrew, *Mediating Modernism: architectural cultures in Britain*, (London: Routledge, 2007), 51 and again on p. 100.

⁵⁴ Gregory, Robert, "Heroism versus Empiricism": 68-72

⁵⁵ "Learning from the Stockholm Exhibition, rather than searching for new forms, they advocated a Modernism that was derived from the specific British milieu, which for them was the Picturesque tradition." Such a position was obviously in direct opposite from the Heroism on the Continent, which promoted a kind of modernism out of tabula rasa, including negations of the past. *ibid.*, 69

⁵⁶ This debate is discussed, among others, in Banham, Reyner, "The Revenge of the Picturesque: English Architectural Polemics, 1945-1965," John Summerson (ed.), *Concerning Architecture: Essays on architectural writers and writing presented to Nikolaus Pevsner*, (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1968) and Joan Ockman, "New Empiricism and the New Humanism," *Design Book Review*, 41/42 (Winter-Spring 2000), 18-21.

⁵⁷ Dr. Lewcock mentioned that the magazine was a must-read publication for architects of those days. See also Higgott, *Mediating Modernism*, 73.

⁵⁸ Higgott, *Mediating Modernism*, 40.

⁵⁹ Bullock, Nicholas, *Building the Post-War World: Modern architecture and reconstruction in Britain*, (London: Routledge, 2002), 42. He argues further that "The Review's approach emphasized the importance of tradition and an

understanding of history. ... the documentation [of the evolution of such elements] was proposed as the basis for recovering the sense of tradition applicable in the design of the new ... (p.44)."

⁶⁰ "Modern architecture however correct, however appropriate it may have been, becomes an imposition, he suggest, if it is not related to people's own sympathies and passions. Only by making a relationship to existing systems of belief can it hope to become a part of a legitimate tradition. The implicit notion of architecture as essentially an expression of a broader culture shapes much of Richards' writing and the Architectural Review had always been deliberately and specifically cultural in its approach (54)." Higgott, *Mediating Modernism*, 54.

⁶¹ Banham, Reyner, "The Revenge of the Picturesque: English Architectural Polemics, 1945-1965," 265-6. He pointed out that the established figures used the Architectural Review as their vehicle, while the younger generations had to wait until the embrace of the Architectural Design in 1953.

⁶² Ibid., 267.

⁶³ Joan Ockman, "New Empiricism and the New Humanism": 19.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 19.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 20.

⁶⁶ "While Corbusier's followers may have seen Swedish 'New Empiricism' as a compromise, there can be no doubt that Asplund and Paulsson were committed to architectural progress. Similarly, it is hard to believe that such writers as Richards and Pevsner would revert to pure revivalism, having both written with considerable authority of Modernism's specific place in historical context. What was seen following the Stockholm Exhibition throughout Sweden (and later Britain through the Architectural Review) was a development of a Modernism that built upon each country's specific cultural milieu, instead of tabula rasa project. Neither Sweden nor Britain wanted to break from the past." Gregory, Robert, "Heroism versus Empiricism": 70

⁶⁷ "The New Empiricism: Sweden's latest style," *The Architectural Review*, Vol.101, No. 601, (June 1947), 199

⁶⁸ Ibid., 200.

⁶⁹ de Mare, Eric, "The New Empiricism: the antecedents and origins of Sweden's latest style," *The Architectural Review*, Vol. 103, No. 613, (January 1948): 9.

⁷⁰ "Stockholm focused the desire to develop a Modernism that would fit into Britain historical context." Gregory, "Heroism versus Empiricism": 72

⁷¹ As Richards wrote in his book: "Sweden, with her instinct for using materials well and her serious sense of social values, has set an example to all Europe of the way modern architecture can solve the problems as the housing of industrial workers." (Richards, *Introduction to Modern Architecture*, pp. 78-79, quoted in Higgott, *Mediating Modernism*, 41).

⁷² See the meaning of "humanism" for the Review in Ockman, note 60. Higgott points out that "De Mare's 'New Empiricism' ... effectively redefined functionalism to encompass that which had seemingly been excluded—the 'psychology' of the users of the new architecture (Higgott, *Mediating Modernism*, 103). ... However the Review's writers were collectively at pains to point out that modern architecture had not abdicated in favor of a vernacular revival: instead, their position was in favor of a plurality in modern architectural design rather than a narrowly functionalist focus (ibid., 104)."

In a similar manner, Bullock asserts that De Mare saw [in the efforts of Swedish architects to humanize architecture] no absolute reaction against functionalism in their work but instead a determination to recast the way that functional principles were interpreted: 'The tendency is ... both to humanize the theory on its aesthetic side and to get back to the earlier rationalism on its technical side (AR, AR, June 47).' ... to be 'more objective than the functionalists, and to bring back another science, that of psychology, into the picture.' (Bullock, *Building the Post-War World*, 46)."

⁷³ Ockman, "1949," in Ockman, J., ed., *Architecture Culture 1943-1968: A documentary anthology*, (New York: Columbia Book of Architecture/Rizzoli, 1993), 114.

⁷⁴ de Wolfe, I., (Hugh de Cronin Hastings), "Townscape: A Plea for an English Visual Philosophy," *The Architectural Review*, December 1949, 360-62 (reprinted in Ockman, J., ed., *Architecture Culture 1943-1968*, 117).

Bullock assesses this phrase in which he pointed out that Hastings presented this strategy as a pragmatic approach that provided an alternative from classicism of Le Corbusier and romanticism of Frank Lloyd Wright. (Bullock, *Building the Post-War World*, 43).

⁷⁵ See Cullen, Gordon, *The Concise Townscape*, (London: Architectural Press, 1999 (original edition: 1971)). This book, still in print, is a concise version of the original book, *Townscape*, published in 1961.

⁷⁶ "Through Gordon Cullen's emerging Townscape and the promotion of Swedish urban landscape, the AR demonstrated a commitment to the Picturesque. ... Townscape (was) seen as an update of Camillo Sitte's Town Planning According to Artistic Principles." (Gregory, "Heroism versus Empiricism": 70) Further, "The Picturesque grouping was ... extremely prescriptive story, ... , that was to be read as a sequence. While appearing casual, the

layout cleverly controlled circulation by providing an interesting and varied juxtaposition of people to buildings. This was strengthened by the Swedish treatment of the ground plain, that had influenced Gordon Cullen's publication of *Leg and Wheel*. (Ibid 71)"

In terms of Sitte's influences, Etlin has argued that Sitte's book, beside that of Choisy, also heavily influenced Le Corbusier's thoughts in formulating the notion of the architectural promenade (Etlin, Richard, *Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier: The Romantic Legacy*, (Manchester & New York: Manchester Univ. Press, 1994), 83-118)

⁷⁷ Higgott points out that "(t)his became one of the Architectural Review's most consistent campaigns, gaining a new relevance at this point in the post-war years: the exploration of the vernacular, of the anonymous architecture which forms a constant but unnoticed part of the urban and rural landscape . . . the argument that the modern architecture could use the powerful forms and spare detail of the 'Functional Tradition,' was a new one (Higgott, *Mediating Modernism*, 101)."

⁷⁸ Pevsner, Nikolaus, "The Picturesque in Architecture," *R.I.B.A. Journal*, vol 55, (Dec. 1947): 55-61

⁷⁹ Pevsner, Nikolaus, "Picturesque," *The Architectural Review*, Vol. 115, no. 688, (April 1954): 228.

⁸⁰ *ibid.*, 228.

⁸¹ Hussey, Christopher, *The Picturesque: Studies in point of view*, (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1927 (3rd impression: 1987)), 186-230. Indeed, as John Macarthur has pointed out, Pevsner' advocacy of the picturesque was a program to continue Hussey's agenda.

⁸² Macarthur, John, *The Picturesque: Architecture, disgust, and other irregularities*, (London: Routledge, 2007), 16

⁸³ Knight, Richard Payne, *An Analytical Inquiry into the Principle of Taste*, Reprinted in Hunt, John Dixon, *The Genius of the Place* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 348-49.

⁸⁴ Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque* (1794), in Hunt, John Dixon, *The Genius of the Place* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 351-57.

⁸⁵ For thorough discussions on the picturesque and the Romantic movement, see Hunt, John Dixon, *Gardens and the Picturesque*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1992).

⁸⁶ Thus, the rise of the term 'sharawadgi,' which indicated imagined features from China.

⁸⁷ Crook, J. Mordaunt, *The Dilemma of Style: Architectural ideas from the Picturesque to the Post-Modern*, (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1987), 13-41.

⁸⁸ Collins, Peter, *Changing Ideals in Modern Architecture 1750-1950*, (Montreal: McGill Univ. Press, 1965), 50.

⁸⁹ Crook, *The Dilemma of Style*, 30-31.

⁹⁰ Hunt, John Dixon, *Gardens and the Picturesque*, Cambridge, 171-191. Ruins and mirrors are the two devices that the picturesque employed in the garden.

⁹¹ "It was during my time in Cambridge that I grew to love the English country house and its landscaped park. A number of my friends had rather nice country houses and I would visit them during the vacations . . . and they all had very nice eccentricities" (in conversation with Channa Daswatte, 1997, quoted in Robson, *Geoffrey Bawa*, 20).

⁹² "The training he thus gave himself in the creation of deliberate visual experience shows continually in his buildings, which incidentally also attempt to relate spaces and elements back to nature wherever possible. The cumulative effect of this concern with visual connections is that the best of his architecture transcends the dichotomy between exterior and interior, and achieves a unity of building and landscape which is often breathtaking (Lewcock, Ronald, "Bawa: Arcadia in Sri Lanka," *RIBA Journal* (February 1986): 18-23)."

⁹³ Bawa, Bon, Sansoni, *Lunuganga*, 9.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, 219.

⁹⁵ Anjalendran, C., *Letter to Dr. Lewcock*, Sept. 11th, 1985, retrieved from Dr. Lewcock's archives.

⁹⁶ Plesner, "If there was Bawa there was Plesner: Interview with Deepali Modi and Ashok Ferey," 7 (italic from the author)

⁹⁷ "... there is always a sense—usually an actual glimpse—of what lies beyond the immediate façade, and this is related to Bawa's skill in the manipulation of interior space. . . . Vistas close and open out again, maintaining a continuity of interest as the eyes comes to rest in turn on a stretch of white walling, a change of texture, a sculptured object; also on one planted garden after another on to which the light and even the tropical rain stream downwards, for his interiors are seldom wholly under cover for long (Richards, J.M., "Geoffrey Bawa," *Mimar 19: Architecture in Development*, (1986): 46)."

⁹⁸ "(Bawa) appears to be guided not by theories but by his eye, and by his feeling for plants and for the landscape—including water, which in Sri Lanka is an essential component of the landscape. His buildings in fact are themselves in the nature of landscapes, not only because they incorporate planting and water and subtly contrived changes of form and level, but because incident follows incident after the manner of a well-composed landscape in which is never

without an element of surprise. Indeed they reflect the continually varying texture of the Sri Lanka landscape (ibid., 46)."

⁹⁹ Robson, *Geoffrey Bawa*.

¹⁰⁰ Gowan, J., ed., *Project Architectural Association 1946-1971*, (London: Architectural Association, 1975).

¹⁰¹ Gray, David, in J. Gowan, (ed.), *Project Architectural Association 1946-1971*, 21.

¹⁰² Boyarski, Alvin, in J. Gowan, (ed.), *Project Architectural Association 1946-1971*, 29.

¹⁰³ ibid., 29.

¹⁰⁴ Miller, John, in J. Gowan, (ed.), *Project Architectural Association 1946-1971*, 30-31.

¹⁰⁵ ibid., 30.

¹⁰⁶ see Banham, "The Revenge of the Picturesque," discussed in page xx. Also Ockman pointed out that these architects fiercely rejected the sentimentalism of the welfare-state architecture., 1957, in Ockman, J., ed., *Architecture Culture 1943-1968*, 240.

¹⁰⁷ Miller, John, in J. Gowan (ed.), *Project Architectural Association 1946-1971*, 31.

¹⁰⁸ ibid., 31.

¹⁰⁹ Banham, 1968, 265-6.

¹¹⁰ Joan Ockman, "New Empiricism and the New Humanism": 20.

¹¹¹ Ockman, 1957, in Ockman, J., ed., *Architecture Culture 1943-1968: A documentary anthology*, Columbia Book of Architecture/Rizzoli, New York: 1993, 240.

¹¹² ibid., 240.

¹¹³ Higgott, *Mediating Modernism*, 91-96.

¹¹⁴ Bullock, *Building the Post-War World*, 107. Examples of such relationship were, among others, Corbusier's interests in Greek architecture and Mies' leaning to those of Schinkel.

¹¹⁵ Banham, "The Revenge of the Picturesque," 269-70.

¹¹⁶ "The Smithson, however, moved on from classicism of Mies to a more realist rigor of Brutalism (Ockman, "New Empiricism and the New Humanism": 20)."

"The Smithson and others would eventually find the formality of classical planning to be inhibiting and formulaic (Bullock, *Building the Post-War World*, 108)."

¹¹⁷ "...long hours were spent trying to apply the Modulor dimensions to the plan of Notre Dame du Haut at Ronchamps, to no avail." Banham, "The Revenge of the Picturesque," 270.

¹¹⁸ "The nearest approach to a major theoretical concept to emerge was the idea of endlessness, [by John Weeks and Llewelyn-Davies] as an interpretation of the façade composition of Mies' immediately post-war work. ...[However, this] was attacked [in 1955] on Wittkowerian grounds by Colquhoun, who insisted on the closed, axial symmetry [of the IIT façade]."

[In the 1960s] Weeks presented [a much richer version of the same proposition, which argues for] concepts as open-endedness, the promulgation of growth and change as qualities to be incorporated in building-designs, the acceptance of expendability and impermanence, all combined to bring on a kind architecture, and architectural philosophy, that must have been looked reassuringly familiar to the editors of the AR. ... [Thus, applied to a specific site, this proposition echoed the advice of Alexander Pope who mentions "consult the genius of the place in all"] (Banham, "The Revenge of the Picturesque," 272)."

¹¹⁹ "Decaying Neighborhood" *Architectural Design*, (October 1956): 321.

¹²⁰ *AA Journal*, (June 1957): 29.

¹²¹ in conversation with Channa Daswatte, 1997, quoted in Robson, *Geoffrey Bawa*, 25.

¹²² Interview with Jimmy Lim; Lim, 1990, quoted in Robson, *Geoffrey Bawa*, 25.

¹²³ Such efforts were a constant topic in the AA journal in the early 1950s.

¹²⁴ Drew, Jane; Fry, Maxwell, *Tropical Architecture in the Dry and Humid Zone*, New York: Reinhold Publishing Co., 1964 (1954).

¹²⁵ In her thesis, Jayewardene argues that the importance of Bawa's work lies in his preference to turn to local building practice in Ceylon instead of following the line of the likes of Fry and Drew. She argues that modern tropical architecture was actually a new form of colonial tropical architecture from the days of colonialism. Further, she asserts that The International Style was, in part, a result of the mix between the interests of building industry, thus the capital, and crystallization architectural methods. Thus, she argues, that the tropical variants of modern architecture is essentially a form of capitalism exploitation of the third world, capturing overseas market, expansion of markets. She argues that the only different between the modern tropical and the colonial was that the former was developed by European in Europe, while the latter was developed by the European in the Third World. See Jayewardene, Shanti,

"Bawa: A Contribution to Cultural Regeneration," *Mimar: Architecture in Development* 19, (1986): 47-49 which was a summary of her Master's thesis at the AA.

¹²⁶ Plesner, "If there was Bawa there was Plesner," 1.

¹²⁷ "I decided to live in Kandy, it being the center of Ceylon and the heart of our national tradition. Once that decision was taken I went back to the craftsmen I had known since my childhood days. Once more I got to know the dancers, the "Dumbara" mat weavers, in fact all the artisans in the different crafts and decided to introduce their work into contemporary modern art to establish the principle of all artist-craftsman being involved with architecture (De Silva, Minette, *The life and work of an Asian woman architect* (Colombo: Smart Media Productions, 1998), 115)."

¹²⁸ "At this time I met Ulrik Plesner who had been in Kandy working with Minette de Silva. She knew many craftsmen, believed in using local materials, and had introduced him to our stone and wood Kandyan architecture. When Ulrik had hepatitis and had little to do in bed I suggested he write the short text for Collecting Old Buildings and was delighted he did, as I knew little of how to assess and judge architecture intellectually. It was a happy association, really shared, as getting a new building to press week after week was quite an effort. Ulrik now suggested that we make a small team and measure a limited selection of buildings as a pilot project for future work, so he taught Laki Senanayake and Ismeth Raheem (who was then a student) how to measure buildings. Our most ambitious measurement was the Kalpitiya Fort, out only by two inches in the drawing up. Once or twice a week we drew and completed our individual work in the annexe to my house which Ulrik had built and now lived in. Armed with drawing boards and measuring tape we set off every weekend. It seemed that it rained—even a bit—every day that year which didn't dampen our spirit in the slightest. We did six or eight buildings this way—I drawing only perspectives, and Ismeth and Laki the measured drawings under Ulrik's supervision. Ulrik also took photographs which were valuable for checking against weeks later. Mr.M.J, Perera, Director of the Cultural Department, gave us a small fund to help towards petrol, which was encouraging. Then Ulrik left Sri Lanka having been an inspiring and charismatic teacher not only to us but to many young architects and students in Colombo. (Sansoni, Barbara, "The Making of this Book: 'To draw a house is to open a windows,'" in Lewcock, Sansoni, Senanayake, *The Architecture of an Island: the living heritage of an island*, xxviii)" See also Plesner own account: "I was amazed by the silence surrounding this heritage and managed a small group of young likeminded enthusiasts. We used the techniques that I had acquired from working on old castles for the Danish Museum, and in the course of three or four years, while hunting around the country in my jeep full of drawing boards, t-squares and thermoses, we found, identified and did measured drawings of a number of beautiful old and valuable buildings. (Plesner, "Ulrik Plesner," *Living Architecture: Scandinavian Design*, Issue 5, (1986): .85)

¹²⁹ Friend, Donald, *The Diaries of Donald Friend*, vol. 3, Paul Hetherington (ed.), (Canberra: National Library of Australia, , 2005), 355-539

¹³⁰ For example, on Nov. 5th, 1957, Friend and the Bawas went out for an auction of furniture. On Nov. 15th, 1957, he took Geoffrey Bawa to the ancient Galapatha temple in Bentota, from which he collected a carving (ibid., 412). Friend noted on October 11th, 1958 of his excursion with Bevis to the small town of Mannar. "We went in search of the ruins of ancient Mahatiittha, and found them, humps of arid grey thron bush—covered soil, near a half-built kovil in the ancient site of Tiv. Bevis and I scabbled among piles of shells, tiles, bricks, and stones, and I found fragments that told of a most curious history ... (ibid., 442)." They continued the trip to Anuradhapura, in which they looked for antiques, such as statues (ibid., 443). On October 17th, 1958, they continued their journey to the ruined temples at Medirigiriya, in which Bevis found a sandstone torso from the 12th century (ibid., 444). "(W)e would say nothing to Geoffrey until he chances to see them, and what a long and inaccurate tale we would tell, for he has been trying hard to get a hold of just such things for his new place and went off recently on a trip for that purpose ... (ibid., 444)."

¹³¹ On Feb. 20th, 1958, he mentioned her trip with Barbara Sansoni to the village potters in order to teach them on the making of decorative wall tiles (ibid., 422). He noted the continuing activities of making decorative tile in his subsequent entries for March, April, and May.

¹³² In an entry for July 7th, 1958: "Lunch yesterday with Geoffrey Bawa: Barbara and Hildon were there, and a handsome romantic young Danish architect, partner of Minette de Silva. He was charming and amusing; we talked about the possibilities, for Ceylon's present needs, of revising defensible domestic architecture (ibid., 436)."

¹³³ In an entry for June 6th, 1962: "Barbara Sansoni these days in great form ... She has ceased doing journalism. "... But Ulrik and I are doing a book—I'm doing the drawings, he's [doing] the writing, on Ceylon architecture (ibid., 536)."

¹³⁴ Weeraratne, Neville, *43 Group: A chronicle of fifty years in the art of Sri Lanka*, (Melbourne: Lantana, 1993), 4-20

¹³⁵ Ibid., 11-13. Western style painting came to the island along with the arrival of the British in the 19th century, which then gave rise to organizations devoted to the advancement of the pictorial art. The Colombo Drawing Club or the Portfolio Sketch Club appeared in the early 1880s, followed by the Colombo Society of Arts in 1891, which aimed at promoting pictorial art. Such organizations mirrored the colonial system in Ceylon, which created Sri Lankan in the

British mold through education, including mirroring European taste and ideals in the arts. See also Mohan, Jag, "Modern Movement in Sinhalese Art," in *Marg*, Vol. 3, (1952): 60.

¹³⁶ Weeraratne, *43 Group*, 16. (Italic by the author)

¹³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 16. See also Mohan, "Modern Movement in Sinhalese Art," 60. Mohan mentioned that Winzer, Wendt, and Darayanigala "brought reprints of paintings of the Impressionists and Cubists to Ceylon which provoked young painters to experiment in the new styles."

¹³⁸ Some of the painters, including the leading figures of the group, George Keyt and Justin Dariyanagala, have had their paintings rejected from the annual exhibition of the Colombo Society of Arts. See Weeraratne, *43 Group*, 15; Mohan, "Modern Movement in Sinhalese Art": 59.

¹³⁹ For example, in 1952 John Berger of *the New Statesman and the Nation* considered their work as attempts at synthesizing the work of Matisse and Picasso and the tradition of Sigiriya, while Maurice Collis of *Art News* termed their work as attempts "to express Ceylon in terms that are both Oriental and contemporary," while an anonymous reviewer in *Freedom* pointed out to the paintings as an expression of the daily life in the island (Weeraratne, *43 Group*, 26-28).

¹⁴⁰ Weeraratne, *43 Group*, 23-30

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*, 78-79

¹⁴² *ibid.*, 102-03

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, 34. Weeraratne himself assessed Keyt's figures as "very moving and truly magnificent, providing a splendid vehicle for the cubistic elements Keyt had discovered from modern Europe to combine the resolute line of the East (*ibid.*, 107)."

¹⁴⁴ "Contemporary Artist," *Marg*, Vol. 3, (1952): 63

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, 64

¹⁴⁶ Weeraratne, *43 Group*, 4

¹⁴⁷ Boyd, Andrew, "A People's Tradition," *The Architectural Review*, Vol. 90, (September, 1941): 73-6. re-published in *Marg*, Vol. 1, no. 2, (1947): 25-36

¹⁴⁸ "Ceylon's First University," in *Marg*, Vol. 3, no. 1 (1949), 12-19.

¹⁴⁹ Anjalendran, C., Wanasundara, Rajiv, "Trends and Transitions: A review of styles and influences on the built form in Sri Lanka (1940-1990)," *Architecture + Design*, (March-April 1990): 26-33

¹⁵⁰ See note 128.

¹⁵¹ The architect documented her work in her monograph, De Silva, *The life and work of an Asian woman architect*, 115-220

¹⁵² For a thorough discussion of the political history of the island in the 20th century, see K.M. de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1981), 373-563.

¹⁵³ See Perera, N "Indigenising the Colonial City: late 19th century Colombo and its landscape," *Urban Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 9, (2002): 1703-21. See also de Silva, K.M., *A History of Sri Lanka*, 495. Such an intelligentsia includes Sinhalese schoolmasters and *ayurvedic* physicians.

¹⁵⁴ A. Pieris, "The Trouser under the Cloth," in P. Scriver and V. Prakash, (ed.), *Colonial Modernities: Building, dwelling and architecture in British India and Ceylon*, (London: Routledge, 2007), 199-218. See also N. Perera, "Indigenising the Colonial City: late 19th century Colombo and its landscape."

¹⁵⁵ For the discussions of the development of the ethno-nationalism in Sri Lanka, see K.M. de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1981); K. Goonewardena, "Aborted Identity: the commission and omission of a monument to the nation, Sri Lanka, circa 1989," *Radical History Review*, Issue 82 (Winter 2002): 141-56; S. Kemper, *The Presence of the Past: Chronicles, politics, and culture in Sinhala Life*, (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1991); V. Nithyanandam, "Ethnic Politics and Third World Development: some lessons from Sri Lanka's experience," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 21, no. 2, (2000): 283-311; R. Norton, "Ethno-nationalism and the Constitutive Power of Cultural Politics: A comparative study of Sri Lanka and Fiji," *Journal of Asian & African Studies*, vol. XXVIII, no. 3-4, (1993): 180-197;

¹⁵⁶ Formerly a member of the ruling United National Party, Bandaranaike run the Sinhala Maha Sabha as a social-religious arm of the UNP. Once Bandaranaike split from the UNP and founded the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, the Maha Sabha dissolved itself. See de Silva, K.M., *A History of Sri Lanka*, 497-98. See also Clarence, William, "Conflict and Community in Sri Lanka," *History Today*, (July 2002), 41-47; Nithyanandam, V., "Ethnic Politics and Third World Development: some lessons from Sri Lanka's experience," 283-311. Steven Kemper noted that most of the monks in Sri Lanka associated themselves with SLFP; see Kemper, Steven, *The Presence of the Past: Chronicles, Politics, and Culture in Sinhala Life*, 210

¹⁵⁷ Donald Friend recorded in his memoirs of continuous tensions rooted in the ethnic conflict in Ceylon during his five-year stay.

¹⁵⁸ de Silva, K.M., *A History of Sri Lanka*, 499-500. See also Roberts, Michael, Raheem, Ismeth, Colin-Thome, Percy, *People Inbetween: The Burghers and the middle class in the transformations within Sri Lanka, 1790s-1960s*, (Ratmalana, Sri Lanka: Sarvodaya Book Publishing Services, 1989), 132, which noted that the driving force behind such a victory was a coalition of Buddhist monks, ayurvedic physicians, and 'vernacular-educated teachers,' who had combined with a certain segment of the capitalist middle-class, including the Bandaranaiques.

¹⁵⁹ Roberts, Raheem, Colin-Thome, *People Inbetween: The Burghers and the middle class in the transformations within Sri Lanka, 1790s-1960s*, 132. Such a victory was deemed crucial in the history of modern Sri Lanka, in that Roberts et. al. called the moment "a revolutionary point."

¹⁶⁰ "The other version of nationalism, a Ceylon or Sri Lanka nationalism, emphasized the common interests of the island's various ethnic and religious groups. It had as its basis an acceptance of the reality of a plural society, and sought the reconciliation of the legitimate interests of the majority and minorities within the context of an all-island polity. Its most influential advocate at the time of transfer was D.S. Senanayake. In 1948 this version of nationalism seemed to be a viable alternative to the narrower sectionalisms described above, and held out the prospect of peace and stability in the vital phase of independence. It was based on a double compromise: the softening of Sinhalese dominance by the establishment of an equilibrium of political forces the keynote of which was moderation, and an emphasis on secularism, a refusal to mix state power and politics with religion, even though the concept of a special responsibility for Buddhism was tacitly accepted. The Sri Lanka nationalism had a crucial flaw. It was basically elitist in conception, and it had little popular support extending beyond the political establishment. It required D.S. Senanayake's enormous personal prestige and consummate statecraft to make it viable. (de Silva, K.M., *A History of Sri Lanka*, 496)"

¹⁶¹ The 1972 constitution also enshrined the role of Buddhism in the new republic. "The Republic of Sri Lanka shall give Buddhism the foremost place and accordingly it shall be the duty of the state to protect and foster Buddhism while assuring to all religions the right secured by section 18 (i) (d)." [Chapter II of the 1972 Constitution], see de Silva, K.M., *A History of Sri Lanka*, 550

¹⁶² de Silva, K.M., *A History of Sri Lanka*, 512

¹⁶³ Kemper pointed out that the desire to venerate the past, reviving the moral greatness of ancient kings, colored the development of Sinhalese nationalism. Kemper, Steven, *The Presence of the Past*, 199-201

¹⁶⁴ In this context, the decision to move the administrative capital of Sri Lanka to the new site of Sri Jayawerdanapura-Kotte in 1977 could be read as an attempt to strengthen the narrative of Sinhalese nationalism. The choice of the new site bore the nostalgia of the glory of the past, since it was located near the capital of the ancient Buddhist kingdom of Kotte. For further discussion on the new administrative capital, see Vale, Lawrence, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1992), 190-208.

¹⁶⁵ Roberts, Raheem, Colin-Thome, *People Inbetween*, 132

¹⁶⁶ "Notwithstanding such measures of distinctiveness, notwithstanding their self-perceptions of themselves as Burghers, the majority of Burghers in the 1940s and the 1950s, we contend, did not see themselves as anything other than Ceylonese. In their own conception they were Ceylonese through and through. Indeed, in their worldview they were more truly Ceylonese than those Sinhalese or Tamils whose practices were dominated by caste loyalties or whose political programmes were "communalistic." In this view, both casteism and "communalism" were divisive, primitives and atavistic.

In other words, the Burgher segment of the middle class was among those who stressed a cross-ethnic, composite and transcendental version of Ceylonese nationalism as opposed to a Sinhala nationalism which merged the concepts "Ceylonese" and "Sinhala." This emphasis became especially pronounced after the political changes which took place in 1956. In this transformed situation, an emphasis on cross-ethnic Ceylonese, that is, standing forth as "Ceylonese," became an instrumental means of legitimating their attempt to protect the institutionalized privileged that had aided them in the past (See Roberts, Raheem, Colin-Thome, *People Inbetween*, 132).

¹⁶⁷ Roberts, Raheem, Colin-Thome, *People Inbetween*, 147. See also a short reference to this phenomena in Pieris, Anoma, "The Trouser under the Cloth": 211

¹⁶⁸ Burgher referred to the descendant of the European, mainly Dutch, settlers of the island. However, in general, the term also encompassed the "mechanics," the descendant of the Portuguese who had settled in the island before the coming of the Dutch.

¹⁶⁹ Roberts, Raheem, Colin-Thome, *People Inbetween*, 160-65

¹⁷⁰ Michael Ondaatje has beautifully illustrated the life of the Burghers prior to the Second World War and changes that came afterward in his book, *Running in the Family*, (New York: Vintage, 1993)

¹⁷¹ Roberts et. al. argued that "The Ceylonese identity which was emphasized in the 1950s was an outgrowth from the reformist and Marxist strands of nationalist opposition to the British in the previous decades. It was secular in spirit. This orientation gained in significance after the socio-political changes of 1956. The transformed context placed Ceylonese nationalism in opposition to Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism and in opposition to linguistic nationalism (Roberts, Raheem, Colin-Thome, *People Inbetween*, 136)."

¹⁷² De Silva also provided a brief sketch on the development in the literature in the first half of the 20th century. Particularly, he spotted the development of Sinhalese literature that was written in English. Stimulated by the spread of journalism and newspaper, novel, as a new form of literary expression, also inspired Sinhalese writers. To argue this point, prominent Sinhalese writers turned to ordinary life in the island, such as in the rural settings. Thus, using contemporary techniques—novel—and new medium—English—these writers aims at evoking the sensibilities of life in Sri Lanka. See de Silva, *A History of Sri Lanka*, 482-86

¹⁷³ *ibid*, 503-07

¹⁷⁴ *ibid.*, 517-22. Indeed, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) deliberately portrayed themselves as a populist party, a party of the common men. See also, for example, Roberts, Michael, Raheem, Ismeth, Colin-Thome, Percy, *People Inbetween: The Burghers and the middle class in the transformations within Sri Lanka, 1790s-1960s*, Sarvodaya Book Publishing Services: Ratmalana, Sri Lanka, 1989, p. 132.

¹⁷⁵ *ibid*, p. 539

¹⁷⁶ "It was the time that you could still import things from abroad, the best sliding gears, the best toilets. It was not Sri Lanka at all." Plesner, "If there was Bawa there was Plesner," p.7

¹⁷⁷ For thorough discussions on the history of economy of the island, see for examples de Silva, K.M., *A History of Sri Lanka*, 491-560; Goonewardena, Kanishka, "Aborted Identity: the commission and omission of a monument to the nation, Sri Lanka, circa 1989," *Radical History Review*, Issue 82 (Winter 2002): 141-56; Nithiyanandam, V., "Ethnic Politics and Third World Development: some lessons from Sri Lanka's experience," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 21, no. 2, (2000): 283-311; Wickramasinghe, Nira, "Sri Lanka's Conflict: Culture and lineages from the past," *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 60, no. 1, (Fall/Winter 2006): 107-18

Chapter 4.

A Spectrum of Comparisons: Notes on Various Case Studies

4.1. Introduction

In the previous two chapters, I have analyzed the work of the Sri Lankan architect Geoffrey Bawa, focusing on the way in which the architect worked out the idea of modernity in the context of Sri Lankan architecture and culture. In his designs, Bawa aspired toward bringing in ideas of modern architecture and architectural expressions that reflected his cosmopolitan views, which, to a large extent, were a reflection of the conditions of modernity. However, his strategies were tightly related to the past architecture in the island, notably the Dutch and Portuguese colonial architecture. Taking into account this approach, could we expand the understanding of modernity in Bawa's approach as a way to problematize the ways in which issues of modernity and locality are dealt with in architectural works in various other places?

Hence, this part of this research specifically examines a cross-cultural comparison of several practices that operate in different locales in our contemporary world, exploring the works of Samuel Mockbee and the Rural Studio in Alabama, Gregory Burgess in Australia, and Mangunwijaya in Indonesia. The built works analyzed in this chapter have been recognized in the architectural world through various awards and favorable critical responses.

4.2. Samuel Mockbee and the Rural Studio, Auburn University, Alabama

The late Samuel Mockbee (1944-2001) was an American architect who grew up, lived, and practiced in the South. After a string of successful commissions in practice

with his partner, Coleman Coker, Mockbee embarked on a new path in his architectural career. In 1992, Mockbee, together with D. K. Ruth, director of the School of Architecture at Auburn University, co-founded the Rural Studio, a design-build program at the school. The program would take students from the second- and fifth-year levels to Hale County in Alabama in particular and to West Alabama in general to stay and live during the duration of the semester to engage in design-and-build projects. The county itself was famously covered in Walker Evans and James Agee's book, *Let Us Now Praise the Famous Men*, which depicted conditions in the era of the Great Depression. Mockbee passed away unexpectedly in 2001, but the Rural Studio continued. The works pioneered by Mockbee have been warmly welcomed in architectural discourse throughout the United States, earning them recognition as a type of architectural approach that addressed a wide range of social and cultural issues. This study focuses on the works of the Rural Studio in the Mockbee era, since under the guidance of his successors, slight changes in his design approach have occurred: the stress on finished drawings rather than on improvisation and on less use of recycled materials, which were replaced by more of durable, easy-to-maintain materials. Particularly, the analyses focus on the works of the studio that have been widely publicized.

4.2.1. Bryant House, Mason's Bend, Alabama

The house was the first project of the Rural Studio, designed and built for the Shepard Bryant family, an elderly couple who had raised their three grandchildren (figure 4.1). The house was the result of a year-long interactive studio in which the students worked closely with their client in developing the design scheme. The original plan of the building consisted of a large living space with a large stove, a main bedroom for the Bryant couple, a private bathroom between the living room and the Bryant's room, and three small niches at the back for the three grandchildren. In the back, the three

sleeping niches would form three vaulted masses that were attached to the rectangular mass of the main house. The students constructed the walls out of bales of hay, two-feet thick covered with lathe and stucco. A large porch ran across the frontage of the house, and an asymmetrical, pitched roof crowned the house. Transparent materials clad the front part of the roof while galvanized materials covered the sloping plane over the main structure.

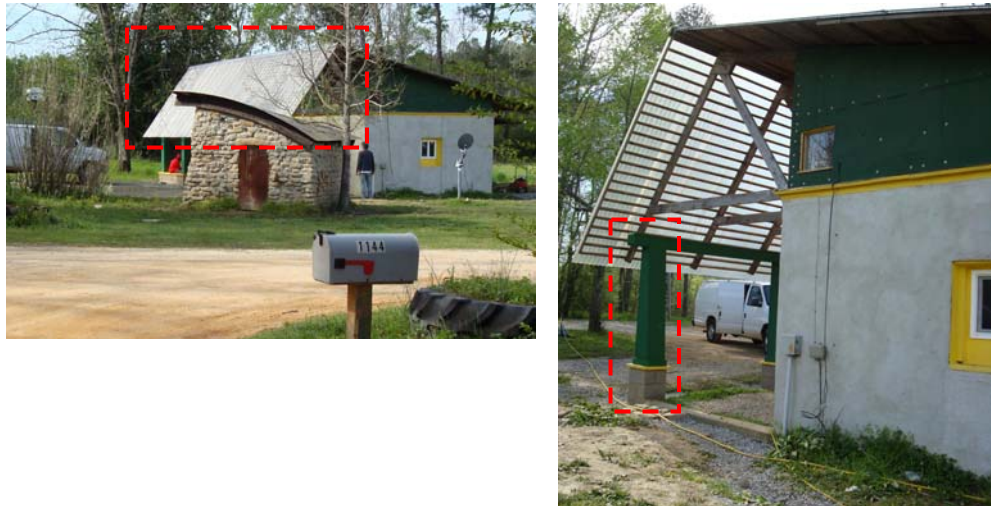


Figure 4.1: Bryant House, the front porch is highlighted by the use of translucent roof and articulations of the columns (red, dashed lines) *(based on photographs by Kim Wadelton, Borneo Workshop, Spring 2009)*

The plan of the house was a long rectangle that was divided into two by a bathroom, forming two main spaces of the house. In this way, the plan of the house resembled the typical arrangement of a saddleback house (figure 4.2), one common type of rural American house. In this type, the plan of the house was a large rectangle

divided into two main spaces by a large fireplace. However, whereas a common saddleback house was divided into relatively two equal parts, the Bryant house was divided unequally, the left half of the house much larger in size (figure 4.3). The element used to organize a common saddleback house was the fireplace, which was visible from the outside through its chimney and thus articulating the division of the house according to elevation. In the case of the Bryant House, the designers used the private bathroom instead as the element to organize the plan. Obviously, the organization of the plan would not be visible from the elevation, as the bathroom did not have an extension through the roof. The fireplace in a saddleback house would act as the center of life for the family and provide heating for the house. In the Bryant house, the fireplace was placed on the rear wall instead, aligned with the placement of the front door. The role of the bathroom as the divider of the main structure stopped short of being an element that formed the division of space and failed to fulfill the role of the center of the house. Thus, in terms of the use of space, the arrangement of the house, although resembling a common type of American rural house in plan, was more related to the use of space in contemporary houses, which was driven by pragmatic considerations.

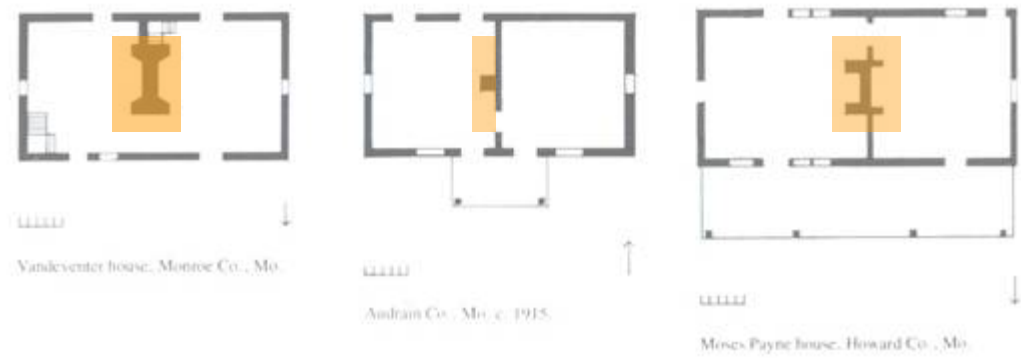


Figure 4.2: Saddle Back House, the highlighted elements are the hearths that serve as a center of the house (*based on Holl, 1983*)

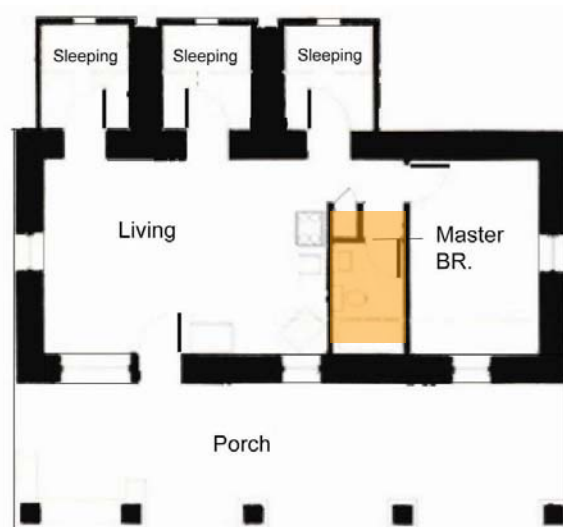


Figure 4.3: Bryant House, plan; the highlighted area indicates the bathroom that divides the plan (*redrawn from a plan on Architecture, Oct. 1994*)

The large porch, with its five large, stout columns and the sloping, transparent roof above it, characterized the façade of the house. The Bryants had specifically requested that the design of the house incorporate such a feature. In fact, this requested element reflected a common architectural feature in houses in the South, that is, a large porch, a feature shared by homes of various scales, from shacks to antebellum mansions. The presence of this feature was in essence a reflection of the social life in the South, characterized by open air activities that took advantage of the warm climate. However, the characteristics of the porch allowed for a different reading. The scale of the porch was exceptional in proportion to the house, in which the height of the porch itself, in sections, extended to the full height of the roof. The sense of the loftiness of the front porch was articulated by the use of a transparent roof in the front, highlighting the tall space. This characteristic was emphasized further through the design of the columns, each of which sat on a brick base as if it were seated on top of a pedestal. The arrangement of the columns and the beam invited a reading of an arrangement of columns and entablature. In this way, despite the common allusion to contemporary houses and shacks in the rural South, the porch of the Bryant house alluded to that of an antebellum mansion, which often has a double-story porch, articulating its grandness. The porch of the Bryant House was indeed contradicting its small size through its play of scale.

The formal arrangement of the Bryant House articulated the role of the roof, with the porch in the front and the wide overhang in the back. Mockbee and his students used a variety of materials such as stucco, bales of hay, galvanized metal, and timber that represented features significant to the appearance of the house. The overall appearance of the house, united by the roof, created a profile of a singular combination. However, upon closer observation, it would reveal various elements created by shapes

and materials that formed parts of the larger whole, a combination that worked together to form the formal arrangement of the house. Thus, the house defied unity between the profile and the shape. Other interpretations of this characteristic would allow an association with common trailer houses that dotted the American landscape. Over time, a trailer house would often incorporate various additions in a disjunctive manner. However, the disjunction between the profile and the shape would also play into the image of a collage, a construction of various elements that alluded to a particular profile without any inherent unity.

These formal and spatial strategies seem to play an underlying role in the approaches of Mockbee and the Rural Studio. Buildings designed and constructed by the studio under his guidance would reveal the presence of oversized porches, combinations of different shapes, and the use of various materials, mostly used ones. However, the prevalence of the roof would create a strong profile provided the whole arrangement with definition. The attention to the porch as a particular design element characterized the works of the Rural Studio, charging it with a spatial and formal significance that accommodated the way of life in the South. In the Harris House (1997) (figure 4.4), another example of a Rural Studio work, the designers came up with a large porch that occupied almost half of the house, creating a distinctive character to the house through its dominance in scale and shape. Instead of creating a pitched roof with a ridge, the designers inverted the slope and created a butterfly roof—hence, explaining its nickname, the “Butterfly House.” Under this roof, the balloon frames of the house were exposed through the use of translucent, plastic cladding. Another example was the Yancey Chapel (1995), a thin, elongated structure for eighty parishioners that was inserted into the topography. Two sloped planes formed the seemingly pitched roof. However, the edges of the two slopes did not meet to form a ridge, creating a thin gap

on the roof. This gap allowed light to penetrate and accentuated an axis that directed the parishioners' gaze to the landscape beyond the chapel. The sinuous walls on the long sides of the chapel, formed by used tires, were also detached from the roof. The overall appearance of the chapel would give a reading of a typical long, pitched structure. However, closer observation would reveal various detached planes of different materials that form the overall formal arrangement. In its project of the Mason's Bend Community Center (2000) (figure 4.5), the Rural Studio essentially constructed a gigantic shed with an asymmetrical roof. One side of the roof, with its sheer steepness, created an image of a wall. This part of the roof was clad in panels of used windshields. The elongated parallelogram form of the plan conformed to conditions dictated by the site. Similar to the chapel, the community center also offered a profile of an elongated pitched structure constructed out of detached planes.



Figure 4.4: Harris House, nicknamed the butterfly house because of its roof. The design exposed the balloon frame of the house *(based on a photograph by Kim Wadelton, Borneo Workshop, Spring 2009)*



Figure 4.5: Mason's Bend Community Center. Note the highlight on the use of windshield that gives an impression of modular units similar to that of shingles (*based on a photograph by Kim Waderton, Borneo Workshop, Spring 2009*)

4.2.2. Notes on the works of Mockbee and the Rural Studio

In the demographics of housing in America, according to Brian Bell, the architectural profession only directly serves 2% of the population, including 1% in the uppermost economic stratum and 1% in the lowest level in the form of public housing—while 98 % of the population is left in the hands of developers.¹ In this context, the works of Samuel Mockbee and the Rural Studio are an exception. Working for the unfortunate in rural Alabama, the design approach of the Rural Studio relies on hands-on training, a design-built approach, design charrettes, cooperation and collaboration, and dialogues and interactions with the community. These approaches represent architecture that focuses on combating poverty, a means by which Mockbee explored the theme of social engagement in dealing with race and economic issues in the South. Through his designs, Mockbee stressed the social aspect of architecture that he applied in his teaching in the Rural Studio:

Alberti talked about choosing between fortune and virtue. ... Every piece of architecture should express some moral. ... For me, the professional challenge, whether I am an architect in the rural American South or the American West, is how to avoid becoming so stunned by the power of modern technology and economic affluence that I lose focus on the fact that people and place matter.”

“[These small projects] remind us that we can be awed by the simple as much as by the complex, and if we pay attention, they will offer us a simple glimpse into what is essential to the future of American architecture ... its honesty.”²

These remarks, besides their ideological overtones, also stressed the moral aspects of architecture and honesty as well as a critical awareness of technological advances and economic parameters.

In terms of design, Mockbee and his students most often employed as their materials found, salvaged objects, the detritus of everyday life such as tires, bales of hay, license plates, and windshields. The assemblage of these materials created a commentary on the shacks that the poor often lived in but also continues the common themes of Southern architecture such as the large veranda. Indeed, some commentaries, notably that of Andrea Oppenheimer Dean, have pointed to the continuity in the visual vocabulary between Mockbee's designs, such as the Cook House in Mississippi, created in his private practice, and that of his students' work, which interpreted common idioms in the Southern landscape such as shed roofs, barns, free-standing chimneys, corrugated tin and concrete blocks of agricultural buildings, dogtrot forms, porches, and trailer homes.³ These features are then exaggerated in the new designs, forming features such as inflated, protective roofs that appear to float over sturdy walls.⁴ Mockbee himself attempted to achieve a balance between modernity and a sense of place, echoed in his remarks:

I pay attention to my region; I keep my eyes open. Then I see how I can take that and reinterpret it, using modern technology. We don't try to be Southern, we just end up that way because we try to be authentic. When you start to use historic references in a theatrical way, that's when I'm out of here.⁵

Mockbee's inclination for using salvaged, used, and found items as building materials for structures that the Rural Studio built provides a memorable impression of its work during the era of Samuel Mockbee.⁶ This particular choice of building materials, indeed, echoes those of modernist artists in the early twentieth century, such as the Constructivists and the Surrealists, who capitalized on found objects as their medium to convey their artistic message. Besides the use of found objects, Mockbee, both in his own works as well as those he oversaw in the Rural Studio, also exhibited a particular sensitivity by situating his architecture in the landscape of the South. One example is his reference to idioms such as trailer homes. The choice of materials and the aesthetic references are perhaps best described as representing interest in the "mundane" and in "waste."

The choice of materials used by the Rural Studio was perhaps a pragmatic choice in circumstances in which limited resources are available. Obviously, the use of salvaged material substantially cuts down the cost of projects. However, besides the pragmatic dimension, the choice of materials also allows for various readings of the works of the Rural Studio. In a world in which the availability of materials is abundant, the use of left-over, recycled materials is a critique to the consumer culture with its rapid cycle of consumption and its planned obsolescence. Their works also pose a critique to the notion of "home." Homeownership is part of the American Dream, a notion that seems to be embraced by Mockbee and his pupils. However, their idea of "home" embraces an image different from the common ideal home with a white picket fence in a subdivision. Instead, the image of a home for them also includes trailer homes and their various modifications, an ideal that represents an extreme divergence from the idealized, commonly held version of a home.

In a more poetic direction, the choice of materials and the artistic reference to marginal phenomena can serve as an analogy to the interest in the notion of “ruins.” In fact, in the history of modern architecture, the fascination with ruins dates back to the Romantic era, in which ruins of antiquity inspire their imagination of the glories of the Greeks and the Romans. However, the notion of ruins also embodies another dimension, that is, the German Baroque understanding of ruins and the notion of allegory, as elaborated in Walter Benjamin’s works on German Baroque drama.⁷ In Benjamin’s view, in the Baroque vision, the same images of ruins serve a similar purpose, as emblems depicting the decay of nature, telling of the transitory of human existence, and hence representing history as a process of disintegration.⁸ The German Baroque’s preference of allegory over symbol leads to an interest in the immanent and the quotidian. Indeed, the Germans were fascinated with ruins, representing the decay of history instead of eternity, as a way to present the allegory of the futility of history.⁹ Thus, the design strategies of Mockbee and the Rural Studio can be read as working on the ruins of our contemporary world, of modernity, that points to an allegory of the merely temporary state of the industrial, consumer society.

Mockbee’s efforts to engage the issue of the social dimensions of architecture through the academic world can be seen as a way of advancing his agenda within existing institutions. He capitalized on the idea of charity as a way to engage social and economic disparity, a long distance from the notion of state interventions to ameliorate such problems. He seemed to have felt that this was the way the Rural Studio had to operate to advance their agenda within the existing social and political structures. The works of the Rural Studio and Samuel Mockbee are completely unlike those of the Modern Movement agenda in their achievement of a utopian society through grand projects. Instead, while maintaining a similar idealism of achieving a better world through

art and architecture, they choose to deal with this situation strategically, embracing incremental actions as the best available road. In a way, it situates the vision for a better world in the local conditions. Their works also show that contemporary aesthetics is not an exclusive domain of the elite.¹⁰ In formal and spatial terms, their works articulates common elements in the Deep South, that is, the porch and the bog roof. In dealing with these elements, they work with the formal, perceptual, and experiential qualities of those elements, instead of abstraction. Hence, houses and public facilities that they design emphasize the experience of living in the South, without recreating traditional architecture of the area. Further, the emphasis on the design-build process allows them to problematize the experience further through the attentions to details and materials.

4.3. Gregory Burgess: Aboriginal Cultural Centers, Australia

The second case that this dissertation will examine is the work of the Australian architect, Gregory Burgess. The discussion focuses on two of his projects that have won the Kenneth F. Brown Asia Pacific Culture and Architecture Design Award, sponsored by the University of Hawaii in Manoa in cooperation with the Architects Regional Council Asia (ARCASIA). These projects are the Brambuk Living Cultural Centre and Uluru Aboriginal Cultural Centre, in which the architect worked with the minority group, the indigenous Australian Aboriginals. The former also won the Sir Zelman Cowen Award in Australia. Developing his designs in close discussion and collaboration with members of the minority that he served, Burgess created buildings that captured aspects of cultures, including myths, of aboriginal Australians, the Brambuk and the Anangu, as well as responding to their sensitivity to the sites.

4.3.1. The Brambuk Living Cultural Centre and The Uluru Kata-Tjuta Cultural Centre

The Brambuk Living Cultural Center (figure 4.6) in the Grampian National Park in Western Victoria, the first of Burgess' works for the Australian Aborigines, was conceived in close collaboration with the Brambuk, a group of indigenous people that resided on the site and who provided myths related to aboriginal totems as a starting point for the design. The word *brambuk* itself meant "white cockatoo," their mythological ancestors. According to the architect, features of Brambuk totems inspired the design, such as the eel, animated as the form of several ramps, the whale as the ridge-spine, the eagle as the form of the roofs, stone as the base of the project, and the tree as posts.¹¹ The program of the facility included ceremonial grounds, a display area, a theater, a workshop for resident artists, retail shops, and offices. The success of the Brambuk project spurred enthusiasm for embarking on this type of project and using such an approach.

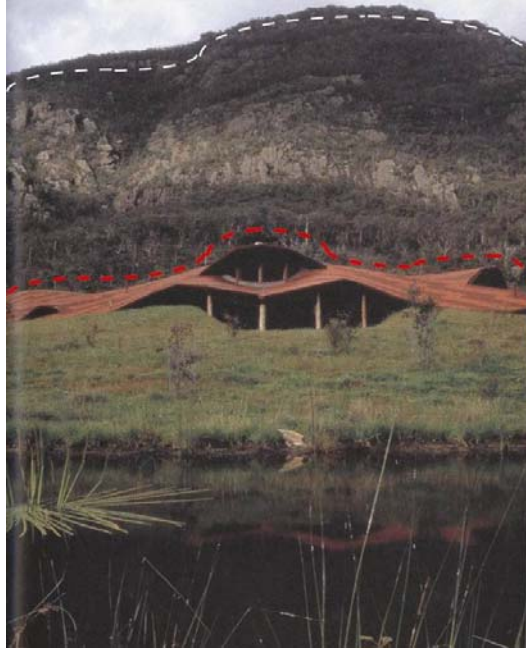


Figure 4.6: Brambuk Living Cultural Center, the line of the roof (red, dashed line) echoes the landscape (white, dashed line) (*Based on A+U, no. 5 (320), May 1997*)

The design of the cultural center was comprised of a series of related indoor and outdoor spaces with large outdoor spaces surrounding a covered space in the center. Burgess seemed to have used zoomorphic forms to refer to myths about animal and the circular shapes of aboriginal structures found nearby. Indeed, as Paul Memmott noted, Western Victoria was known for the findings of the distinctive stone architecture of the Aborigines.¹² Furthermore, according to Memmott, the plans of these structures were based on the circular form with variations such as interlocking circles and had openings oriented to the east or northeast in accordance to the wind direction in the winter. The plan of the center was three interlocking, large circles, accompanied by several smaller circles, that created a sinuous form (figure 4.7). According to Kim Dovey, these circles represented the five Koori communities, the users of the cultural center.¹³ A continuous open space, also based on the arrangement of overlapping circles, surrounded the

structure. Earthen berms that formed an enclosure for the ceremonial ground defined this outer open space. The interior of the main space contained a massive stone fireplace that articulated the local belief of the hearth as a representation of the axis of the universe (figure 4.8). This main space was a double-story space lined with a large ramp that connected the two levels of the center. It was supported by twenty-four wooden columns made out of tree trunks. These columns, with their curved profiles and their bark still intact, complemented the sinuous form of the space and enhanced the rustic feel of the center. However, the structural pattern hinted at the regularity of the structural modules. The undulating roofs of the centers perfectly echoed the rocky hills in the surrounding landscape. Burgess executed the cultural center for the Brambuk utilizing commonly-used construction methods and materials. The timber used for the structure of this remote place was prepared in an on-site workshop and the base was made from local sandstone, on top of which compacted earth was used for the wall.¹⁴

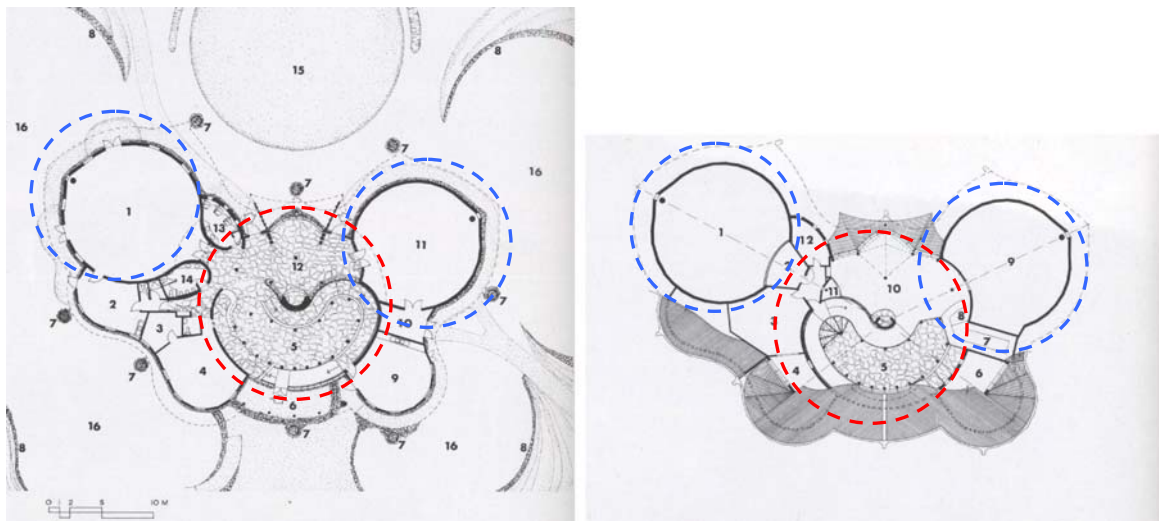


Figure 4.7: Brambuk Living Cultural Center, the circles that form the plan. The red circle is the main hall (*Based on plans from A+U, no. 5 (320), May 1997*)

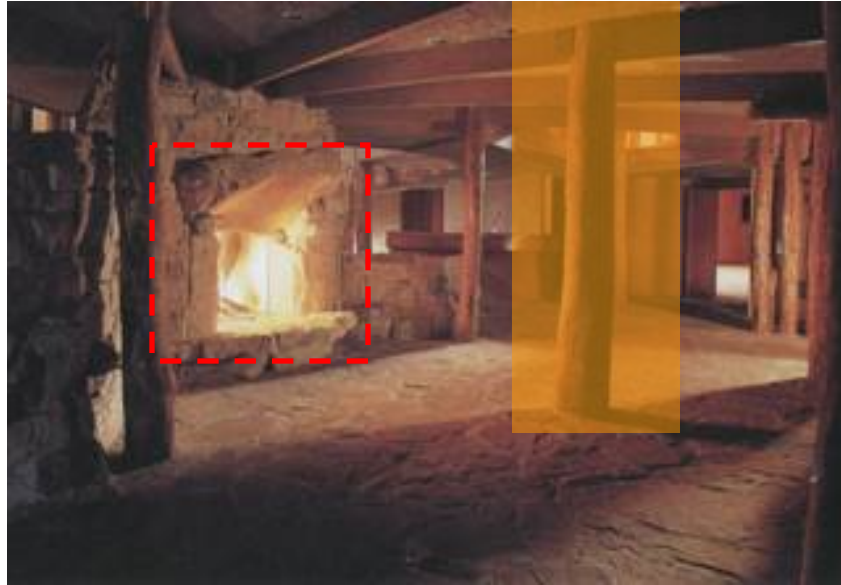


Figure 4.8: Brambuk Living Cultural Center, the main hall that is centered on a hearth. Note also the rugged columns (*Based on a picture from A+U, no. 5 (320), May 1997*)

After the Brambuk Centre, Burgess was commissioned to work on another cultural center, the Uluru Kata-Tjuta Cultural Centre in the desert in the Northern Territory. The location of this center was off the iconic Uluru, about a kilometer away from the rock. The Uluru, known as Ayer's rock in the past, was a sacred place for the Anangu, the aboriginal people of the central desert of Australia. Thus, the facility would serve as a point from which visitors could encounter the Anangu, the guardian of the rock. The Uluru Kata-Tjuta Cultural Centre was comprised of two sinuous structures that bounded an open space connected visually to the rock as its focal point. The distinctive shape of the cultural center, in fact, was based on an Anangu myth about a battle between a female carpet snake, Kunija, and a poisonous male snake, Liru, both of which take a wary position of each other.¹⁵ The design revealed another zoomorphic approach,

an idea derived from collaboration between the design team, headed by Burgess, and the representatives of the elders of the Anangu, who engaged in a month-long design charrette. During this collaborative work, the Anangu told stories about the rock, which served to establish the laws of the Anangu and translated to their paintings. Sketches in the sand drawn by the Anangu provided significant input into the development of the project. The cultural center also carried considerable artwork done by the Anangu, such as the murals adorning the interior.

The two masses of the cultural center contained spaces that were derived from the basic shape of circles (figure 4.9). The architect arranged the four clusters of circles around a pear-shaped open space to form a V-like arrangement that opened to the Uluru rock. In one way, the arrangement became an axial composition in which the axis was derived from its topographical relationship to the Uluru rock. As in the Brambuk project, the spatial arrangement of the Uluru Kata-Tjuta project was based on diverted symmetry and on basic geometric forms, which were then countered with a shifting of forms and deformation of the circles, creating a dynamic symmetry. In this center, visual orientation was directed toward the courtyard, which, in turn, channeled to the focal point to the iconic rock. Indeed, according to Memmott, the arrangement of campsites of the Anangu emphasized visual surveillance.¹⁶ In addition, he mentioned that settlements in this part of Australia were usually based on a circular plan with a domed form constructed out of limbs covered with spinifex cladding. Memmott noted further that the notion of *wiltja*, meaning “a semi-enclosed shelter, a shaded area, or an area shaded by a tree,” represented an important feature in any settlement of the Anangu.¹⁷ In this line of thought, the architect created a strong contrast between the bright outside space and the relatively shaded inside, allowing light to penetrate through gaps between the wall and the roof and through screened walls. Further, returning to the theme developed in the

Brambuk project, undulating roofs characterized the masses of the facility, echoing the landscape at the Uluru (figure 4.10). However, compared to the centralized form of the Brambuk project, the Uluru Kata-Tjuta featured two long, linear forms that alluded to the way sacred animals, the mythical snakes, were depicted in the indigenous arts. The low-lying structures also enhanced the horizontal reading that fitted to the surrounding. The walls of the facility were constructed using adobe techniques and the roofs built out of timber and fashioned into rugged shapes.

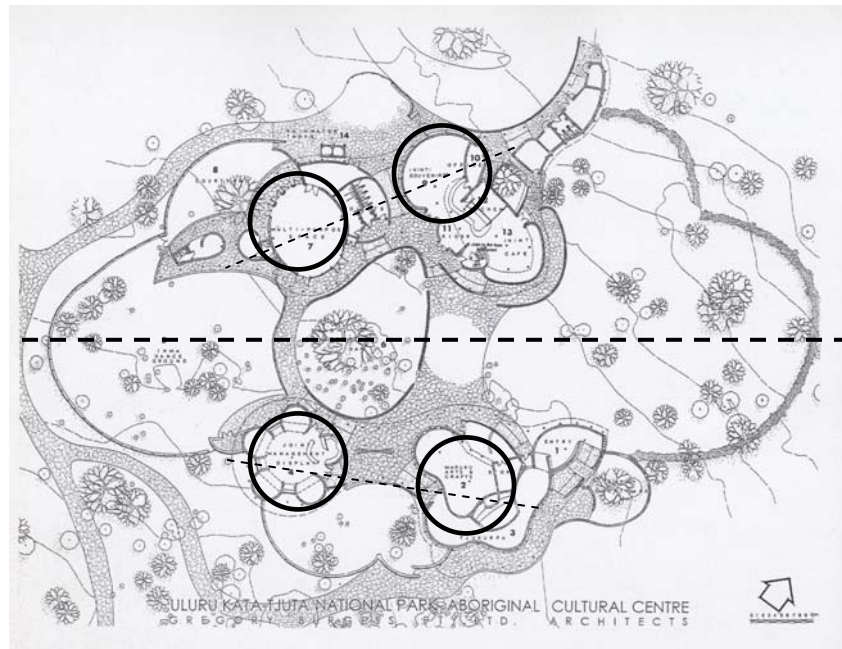


Figure 4.9: The Uluru Kata-Tjuta Cultural Centre, the basic shapes of the plan and the axes (based on a plan from *A+U*, no. 5 (320), May 1997)

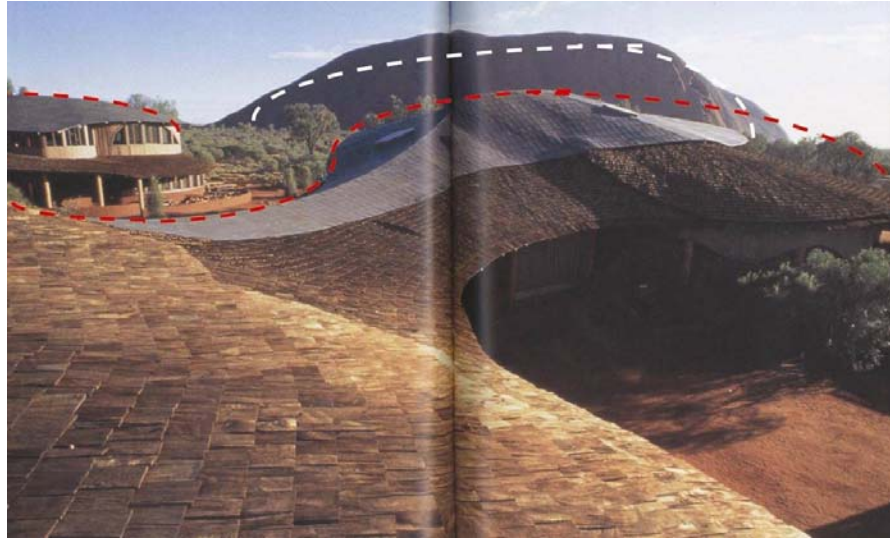


Figure 4.10: The Uluru Kata-Tjuta Cultural Centre, the shape of the roofs (red lines) echoes the landscape (white line) (based on a picture from *A+U*, no. 5 (320), May 1997)

4.3.1. Notes on the two projects of Gregory Burgess

In both the Brambuk and the Uluru-Kata Tjuta projects, the plans reflect the basic circular form of Aboriginal habitations, stone structures in Western Victoria and camp sites in the Western Desert. The appearances of both designs also allude to the zoomorphic form. In the designs, the architect emphasizes orientation to the outside, a feature that characterizes Australian Aborigines settlements. The emphasis on the exterior space also points to the formation of a ceremonial ground. According to Memmott, Aboriginal ceremonial grounds are a “charged setting” functioning as a place to recall series of events of the ancestors and to reenact a particular ancestral history.¹⁸ Memmott also mentions that the rituals performed on this ground would transform the ceremonial ground into an ancestral homeland for the participants, who enact actions of their ancestors and embody their characteristics, a process that establishes unity with

the ancestors. Indeed, Shaneen Fantin argues that an understanding of ancestors is important in Aboriginal culture. The process of understanding relies more on the use of space rather than through direct representations in the built form.¹⁹

The works of Gregory Burgess with Aborigines of Australia are, in a way, attempts to mobilize architecture as a repository of collective memories of the clients, in these cases, the very people that were celebrated by these projects.²⁰ In fact, the buildings store and animate the memories of the Australian Aborigines, derived from their stories and their totems. In a way, these designs suggest the validity of an aspect of their everyday life and the persistence of folk tales, dreams, and memories. Indeed, Burgess and his Aborigine collaborators were able to celebrate these very aspects, dreams, and stories suppressed by rationality. Spatially, the architect turned to the minimalist approaches commonly used by the indigenous people of Australia. The structure emphasizes the notion of shelter that indigenous structures possess. Furthermore, the architect underlined the experiential qualities of his structures through a play of contrasts of lights and shade and contrasts between the sense of openness and enclosure.

Burgess also attempts to root the buildings to the sites in terms of the materials and methods used in these buildings. The use of timber constructions and rammed earth, among other materials, provides a harmony with the picturesque landscapes surrounding these structures. Indeed, the locations of both cultural centers are in a vast, open landscape that characterizes many parts of Australia. These buildings, with their serpentine and sinuous silhouettes, then, appear as rocks or small hills that become parts of the landscape, blending easily to the surroundings. These sensitivities recall the attitude of the Australian Aborigines toward architecture, a view characterized by “the

Aboriginal investment in landscape rather than architecture.”²¹ These cultural centers also resort to the use of passive-energy systems through the choice of materials and methods. These efforts reiterate an attitude that embraces minimal technology such as the use of the materials of daily life rather than high-technology solutions that are often detached from everyday life.

4.4. The Case of Y. B. Mangunwijaya, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

As a final case, this dissertation will examine the work of the architect-priest Y. B. Mangunwijaya from Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Mangunwijaya spent his childhood and much of his professional career in central Java. His experience as a soldier in the war of independence led him to a religious path, and he was ordained as a priest in 1959. Under the direction from the Catholic Church, he studied architecture in Aachen, Germany, in which he received a Dipl. Ing degree in architecture. After he returned to Indonesia, he spent some time serving the church and teaching at a university, during which time he increasingly devoted his attention to community service, especially those that served the urban poor.

4.4.1. Kampung Kali Code, 1984-86²²

Mangunwijaya's work with community and volunteers to design and construct a settlement for a squatter community in Yogyakarta won the Agha Khan Award in Architecture in 1992. The project itself began in the mid-1980's, during which time the municipal government of Yogyakarta, backed by some architects and city planners, engaged in a campaign to eradicate squatter settlements in the city. Drawn by his humanitarian concern, Mangunwijaya, answering a plea from a community leader, agreed to work with a squatter settlement in the most visible spot in the city. The inhabitants of the settlement were people who earned their living in the informal sectors

with incomes far below the minimum wage. Most of them were migrants from rural areas and had little alternative but to occupy a slum near the center of the city. In this settlement, the architect designed and built, literally with his own hands, with the help of volunteers and local inhabitants, a series of houses, public baths, and a community center. The resulting work attracted wide attention locally, nationally, and even internationally, so that in the end, the municipal government withdrew from their plan to eliminate the settlement.

The site of the slum was a piece of narrow, steep land on an embankment of a small river that ran through the center of the city. In response to the topography of the site, the architect utilized every parcel of flat surface that he could find on the site, which resulted in a terraced arrangement. The site plan of the settlement achieved the most effective use of available land and the topography of the site dictated the shape of the building masses, resulting in a series of small rectangular and elongated forms. Some of the masses were two stories high; however, the placement strategy in which buildings of different heights were juxtaposed reduced the apparent scale of these buildings, allowing the overall settlement to maintain its human scale. This arrangement resembled an arrangement of a typical Javanese *kampong*, which was characterized by an irregular placement of structures with a meandering path woven in-between the masses (figure 4.11, 4.12). Responding to the site, the architect transformed the typical layout of a Javanese *kampong* from a horizontal alignment into a vertical one and retained an atmosphere of an ordinary Javanese *kampong* with its high density and winding alleys. Thus, the meandering paths in the settlement were defined not only by structures to the left and the right of it but also by the structures above and below it. In a way, the experience of exploring a *kampong* was heightened through the three-dimensional arrangement. The masses that defined the path were carefully arranged in

scale and size, including breaking down the long, large masses into smaller bays, allowing the architect to maintain the fabric of a typical *kampong* with its small grains. Along the paths, on spots that were wide enough and open to the river, the architect placed the communal spaces. Walking down the path, inhabitants and visitors would traverse along a tunnel-like passage that would suddenly open to the river and the city. The architect animated the environment by asking the volunteers to paint murals on the surface of the bamboo mat walls with motifs and colors derived from Javanese pop-art. This strategy recalled the Javanese custom of painting their carts, their rickshaws, their kites, and other everyday objects, and hence mixing architecture, crafts, and everyday artifacts. In effect, these murals created a sense of a traditional bazaar in which toys of various colors were hung along the alleys.



Figure 4.11: Meandering paths in Kampung Kali Code

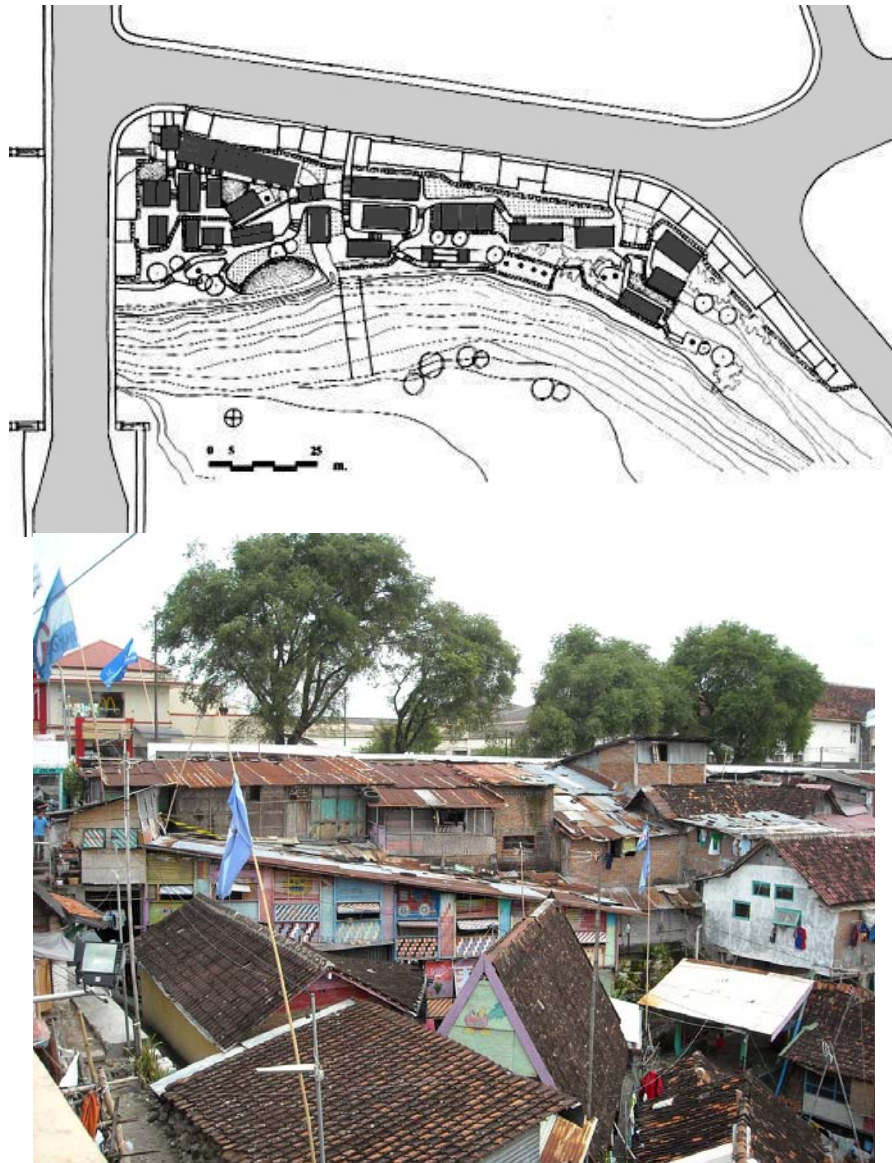


Figure 4.12. Kampung Kali Code (Site plan is based on a plan from <http://archnet.org/library/images/>)

Individually, buildings in this settlement were constructed out of wooden frames clad with bamboo mats, the main building materials for ordinary, if not poor people in Java. In some of the buildings, instead of utilizing the traditional columns-and-beam structure, Mangunwijaya introduced the A-frame system (figure 4.13). The tectonic aspect of the buildings was articulated in the same way as a vernacular building in Java would have exposed its frame structure. Despite the allusion to the tectonic expression in a Javanese house, the use of the A-frame system profoundly affected the formal expression of the building. Instead of being based on a rectangular shape, structures in the settlements were based on triangular shapes. Furthermore, the architect created an opening on each of the sloping planes. As a result, the profile of the buildings resembled the profile of a typical Javanese house; however, the actual shape of the buildings was markedly different. It also emphasized the importance of the roof as the most recognizable feature in architecture in Southeast Asia, by eliminating the wall and turning the entire formal arrangement as a construct of roof planes. With this design strategy, Mangunwijaya celebrated a type of Javanese architecture that has been overlooked by the academic community, for it was considered inferior to the houses of Javanese nobility, seen as the idealized type of Javanese architecture.²³ The formal expressions of the houses in the settlement were another feature in which the architect engaged in architectural tradition in Java. The profiles of the roofs in the settlement alluded to the shape of the roof typically known as the *kampong* or village roof.

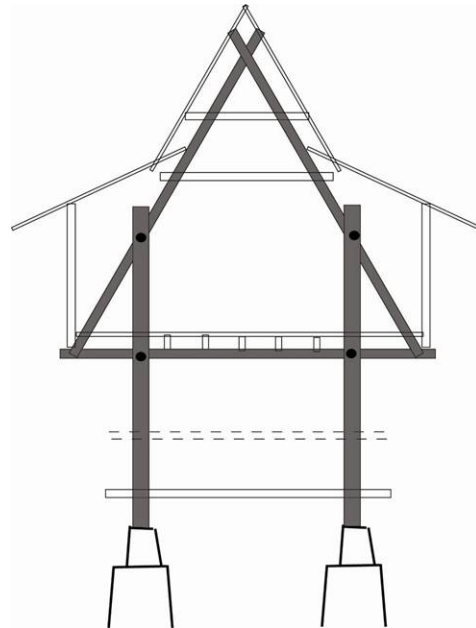


Figure 4.13: A-frame structures (*The diagram is redrawn from a sketched from <http://archnet.org/library/images/>*)

4.4.2. Notes on the work of Mangunwijaya

As he had done in his settlement project, Mangunwijaya used particular design strategies, which included careful attention to the site, the articulation of tectonic aspects, the play of roof, and the creation of a festive atmosphere, as featured in his other projects. According to the architect, his intention, however, was not so much in recreating a Javanese environment. Rather, he aspired more towards the modern sensibilities in architecture. In his book, *Wastu Citra*, Mangunwijaya discussed his theoretical view of architecture.²⁴ He argued that architecture was about an articulation through space and forms of the way humans lived. In examples that he used, the author stressed the idea of beauty as an approach that was honest to materials and structures and that reacted to the environmental conditions. His exemplars of good architecture were those that responded to function and environment. Further, he argued that a good building was a marriage between function and image, the former of which related to the technical aspects of the design. Mangunwijaya pointed to various Southeast Asian rice barns that had sloped roofs to evacuate rain water as soon as possible and that were built on posts to protect from animals and humidity. He argued that even the smallest details of these structures served particular purposes. In a way, he suggested that proper responses to functional problems would contribute to a better life. The aspect of image was related to ideas that prevailed in a community, such as the use of a high pitch in the Austronesian architecture that related to the idea of sacredness and the function of a house as a place of worship that connected heaven and earth. In a way, his thoughts reflected the German Romantics view of the distinction between *Zivilization* and *Kultur*. In his argument, he related the technical aspects to the notion of *Zivilization* and formal appearances to the notion of *Kultur*. Also, his explorations of various forms of traditional and vernacular architecture bore a similarity to the idea of “functional

tradition.” Underlying these beliefs was the conviction of the primary role of an architect to create meaningful spaces.

Mangunwijaya’s work, particularly the squatter settlement, is a demonstration of his view of architecture. It bears his modernist sensibilities to the site conditions and the requirements of the program. His formal, spatial, and tectonic strategies are basically a way to respond to problems and challenges inherent in the site and the program. In this vein, he then borrows from elements in Javanese architecture in arranging the plan and the appearance of his architecture. However, his work also posed a critique to the tendency in architecture in Indonesia. His design defied the rationale of zoning in urban areas, the separation of functions derived from Western theories that, in reality, deprived the needy of easy access to centers of economic activity. The squatter settlement, operating within the framework of an urban structure outlined by the government, was also an appropriation of urban space to the underrepresented, showing the right of every citizen to urban space. This operation took advantage of the location, appropriating space that was forbidden to them, and time, calculating the exposure of their cause. The formal language employed in the design also defied the standard, academically accepted taste of Javanese architecture. Contemporary practice tended to employ an idealized version in various institutional as well as private buildings, including the urban villas of the well-to-do, which created a growing perception of ideal Javanese architecture, modeled after palaces, as a representation of the Javanese identity.²⁵ On the other hand, by using ordinary Javanese architecture, the architect ensured the continuity of the horizon of understanding of architecture for inhabitants, avoiding a total rupture from tradition in the built environment. At the same time, Mangunwijaya showed that architecture was about an active production and reproduction of tradition. He also

appropriated Western technical knowledge, an analysis of building structures, to accommodate and improve local needs.

4.5. Construction of Identity

The discussion in this dissertation so far hinges on the question of the construction of identity in the intersection between the notions of modernity and locality. One of the reactions to the notion of identity is the view that establishing identity is essentially a human attribute that depends on experience; in our consciousness of the environment, it has historical aspects.²⁶ Following this line of thought, Pierre Bourdieu problematizes the relationship between a structure—an impersonal, autonomous, and ahistorical entity that governs human action—and individuals in a society, in which he disputes the theory that an individual is a mere replica of a culture, which would include the structure, and that this in turn would imply the superiority of the structure over the individual.²⁷ Instead, Bourdieu argues that a structure and an individual are always in a dialectical position, and he proposes a theoretical construct of *habitus*, a generative principle that allows for improvisation, which, in turn, produces *practices* that reproduce those very principles while adjusting them to objective conditions. Following this argument, practices are transformed into collective actions because of a dialectical relationship between *habitus*, a matrix of perceptions, including a system of a lasting disposition that integrates past experiences, and objective conditions that demand specific responses.²⁸ Bourdieu's model provides a historical pattern of relationships among individuals, the collective, and the structure, in which none of them occupies a central position. Bourdieu's construct also carries a crucial implication, that is, an emphasis on the role of the individual, which he labels as "agency." Agency is not only a mere product of the system, but also an active entity that produces and reproduces the system, or the structure.²⁹ However, Bourdieu's scheme in terms of *habitus* as a

collective *habitus* identifies agency as “a structural variant, ... a specification of the collective history of a class.”³⁰ Along this vein, by positioning the agency as an active individual, this view implies that the acts of production and reproduction will possibly contain traces of the agency itself. Furthermore, agency may also represent an entity that stands at the intersection of various systems and thus a layering of various structures.

Following this line of thought, in architecture, Gwendolyn Wright argues that human beings engage in creative activities that draw inspiration from past conditions, traditions, and present conditions, which in the case of architecture guarantees the horizon of understanding for such architecture, echoing Bourdieu’s view.³¹ Wright also stresses that human beings may tend to choose certain kinds of architectural associations and to instill in them different meanings from those originally intended by architects. In relation to this discussion, it is worth mentioning the notion of the role of architecture in terms of memory, proposed by Stanford Anderson, who makes a distinction between “societal memory” and “disciplinary memory.”³² The former, in Anderson’s term, refers to the understanding of architecture as carrying the memories of a particular society, which also refers to the social development of a society. Anderson provides the example of the Holy Sepulchre, in which he refers to studies by Krautheimer, who stresses the aspects of geometry and numerology.³³ Anderson underlines Krautheimer’s argument that much of architecture in Medieval Europe served as a copy of the Holy Sepulchre, a simulacrum, indexing selected features that were deemed comparable to the idea of the Holy Sepulchre, such as the round shape, the rotunda, and a reproduction of a tomb. Medieval builders did not copy the original model, but instead reproduced the underlying idea, thus reinvigorating the memory of Christ, that is, “memory through architecture.” Anderson also notes the strong presence of

“societal memory” in vernacular architecture from various parts of the world.³⁴ Unlike society memory, Anderson’s term “disciplinary memory” refers to the notion of memory being structured in architecture as a discipline such as the notion of styles.³⁵ However, he warns that the two concepts of memory could easily be blurred. A building can evoke social memory in relation to social developments of that society, but it can also provide clues to disciplinary memory through, among others, the notion of style.³⁶

Anderson also attempts to relate the two conceptions of memory in relationship to societies’ consciousness of history.³⁷ He postulates that in pre-literate societies devoid of historical reconstructions, vernacular architecture embodied a cohesion between “societal memory” and “disciplinary memory.” In such a case, the art of building maintained existing physical structures but helped to create new ones. In other words, the building practice was a set of generative rules that includes the symbolic aspects. Although this art had existed from time immemorial in which changes and innovations went unrecorded, it was a matter of the present.³⁸ The second condition that Anderson postulates is that of literate societies without any strong practice of historical reconstruction. In this condition, the relationship between the two types of memory was less cohesive; disciplinary memory, such as the perception of styles, started to come to the fore.³⁹ The third condition that he postulates is that of highly historicized societies, which were constantly confronted by written records of the past, which were actually a reconstruction of memories. In these societies, Anderson postulates the existence of a high degree of loosening of the cohesion between societal and disciplinary memory. This situation exemplifies dissolution of the bond between the generative rules and the aspect of meanings as embedded in traditional architecture and the building practice. It opens up the way for abstraction and also for critical attitude toward traditions. He points to the development of public housing in the Netherlands in the first two decades of

the twentieth century, in which architects from various spectra—from traditionalists to modernists—relied heavily on housing types derived from tradition. The Netherlands case demonstrates the prevalence of the understanding of memory within the framework of architectural discipline as a style. This progressive loosening of cohesion, Anderson argues, eventually reaches a point in which relationships with the vernacular become difficult to pinpoint. In this situation, he argues for the phenomena of “vernacular usage” in various degrees, including the use of urban forms, the adaptation of types, and the exploration of architectural forms, among others.⁴⁰ Anderson argues that the presence of “vernacular usage” implies the critical role of traditions that “continues to serve in the maintenance of a dynamic social equilibrium.”⁴¹ Furthermore, he reasserted his view of traditions as a common ground.⁴²

The notion that identity is a construct implies that it is not a feature that comes out organically. Instead, this notion stresses human acts that forge this identity, hence, the notion of agency. In this sense, the construction of identity is historical and is affected by the environment, including the socio-cultural environment. In this discussion, an architect may exemplify the notion of agency, in which an architect operates within a particular structure, such as an imposing structure of traditions. In this scenario, the architect engages in a dialogue with the structure in which he or she lives, negotiating influences. Along this vein, the objective conditions which provide the antithesis to the habitus could be understood as contexts in which an architect works in. In contemporary world, architects as an agency stand in the intersection of influences, both local and global; a situation made possible by the advance of modernity that opens up and expands the spatial and temporal dimensions of connections. The understanding of identity then is no longer determined by a singular association, that is, the association to a particular place. Associations to a particular place could be an association based on

the “vernacular usage.” Instead, identity is determined more by the agency itself. The notion of agency also points to a specific modernist subject, who constructs his or her own identity. In this process, this subject could take a critical distance that allows him or her to incorporate multitude of influences. Cases discussed so far, both in Chapter Two of the work of Geoffrey Bawa and in this chapter, underline the notion that identity is a construction.

4.6. Current Theories of Regionalism

On Chapter 1, I have discussed the concerns to the context, in which the term regionalism was used. Indeed, theories of regionalism seem to be related closely to the discussions of locality. Along this vein, Vincent B. Canizaro provides an overview of the discussion of regionalism. He points out that regionalism has a long history in architecture, dated back even in the writing of Vitruvius that contained suggestions on the varied placement of buildings and cities. Indeed, he asserts that in the Roman political thinking, regionalism was tied to the notion of control, as the etymology of the word regionalism points to the Latin word, *regere*, literally meaning “to rule.” Along this vein, “region” is a conception that is related to the physical aspect, the geographical realms, and the non-physical aspect, the culture of people of related areas. Thus, Canizaro continues, regionalism is essentially a theory about connectedness to a place. However, it is a set of self-conscious choices that differentiates it from the vernacular, understood as a set of accidental and unconscious choices, and from provincialism, which comes about as a set of unsophisticated choices due to its distance and isolation from the cultural centers to which it aspires.⁴³

In recent years, the theory of Critical Regionalism has gained credence in terms of regionalism. Although Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre coined the theory,⁴⁴ it

was the writings of Kenneth Frampton that brought widespread attention to it. The theory of Critical Regionalism posits that regionalism is a form of resistance against consumer culture and the drive toward homogeneity. Lefaivre and Tzonis related their argument about the concept of critical regionalism to that of Lewis Mumford, who accorded architecture rooted to a particular place a role in providing a critical commentary on modern architecture in the post-war era.⁴⁵ However, Lefaivre and Tzonis particularly emphasized the term “critical,” in which they accorded new architecture the task of criticizing mainstream trends in architecture through the use of the technique of defamiliarization, borrowed from the Russian formalists, who defamiliarized what they deemed as regional elements.⁴⁶

Elaborating on the thesis of Lefaivre and Tzonis, Frampton developed his argument with reference to Paul Ricoeur’s thesis of a hybrid world culture based on the cross-fertilization of local culture and universal civilization.⁴⁷ According to Frampton, the architecture of critical regionalism differed from that of the vernacular, which was a spontaneous reaction to climates, cultures, myths, and crafts, and also from that of Populism, which represented a nostalgic effort, “a sublimation of a desire for direct experience through the provision of information.”⁴⁸ Critical regionalism, according to Frampton, is a dual operation critiquing both the universal through the infusion of local values and images and the autochthonous with elements from external influences.⁴⁹ In design terms, Frampton places particular emphasis on the reinterpretations of familiar themes in a way disjunctive from that of the commonly-accepted norms.⁵⁰ Frampton, referring to Ricoeur, reaffirms that critical regionalism implies the notion of regional cultures as “locally inflected manifestation[s] of ‘world culture.’”⁵¹ Following this vein, various examples that Frampton discusses, such as Utzon’s church and Ando’s projects, precisely illustrate the way in which contemporary international architecture, as

understood in Frampton's scheme as architecture based on rationalism, functionalism, and modern architectural language, is inflected to produce unique creation.

Alan Colquhoun has argued that the notion of regionalism was related to historicism that has been discussed in Chapter 1.⁵² The notion of regionalism is actually a manifestation of the belief in the unity of architecture, geographic aspect, and ethnographic group.⁵³ Furthermore, he argued that regional architecture, in its longing for an organic unity between geographical locations, ethnographic group, and architectural styles, is more of "an object of desire" rather than "a real thing"; thus, it is more of a representation than an authentic object.⁵⁴ Colquhoun implied that because of the present situation, the notion of authenticity as desired by the concept of regionalism is more difficult to achieve, for ideal societies themselves have already disappeared. He argued that modernity, through the creation of nation-states and an emphasis on the individual or the subject, has undermined such a unity and articulated this longing for an ideal society through the use of architectural styles as an oversimplification of a complex problem. He also asserted that nation-states undermined the definitions of regions while the modern subject, as a result of the project of the Enlightenment, cultivated values derived from oneself instead of from authorities such as religions or traditions. Following this line of argument, Colquhoun sees Critical Regionalism in a similar thread of the longing of an ideal unity. He has also criticized the use of the word "critical" and the technique of defamiliarization. Such a technique actually reaffirms a rationalism that considers the dissolution of an organic bound between architecture and a society, leaving only fragments that can be picked up at will and arranged in many configurations.⁵⁵ Thus, the use of the technique of defamiliarization would lead to further alienation, a point raised by Juhani Pallasmaa.⁵⁶

Following the theory of regionalism, meanings of a building depend on its association to a location. In the formulation of the theory of regionalism, this location is understood as a part of a region. Along this vein, the region is the generator for the meanings of a building; a set of situation, tied to a place, that provide the significations of a structure. The notion of context would then be understood as the region, in which a geographical location is seen as having an organic bond with the way people who live in that location go about. However, the definition for the term “regional” itself is problematic, as it is a generalization that lumps together cultural groups based solely on geographic factors. Further, the advent of modernity has privileged individuals, hence subjects, over the ethnic group. Thus, in architecture, meanings of a building will be generated more by choices and decisions of the subject, that is, the architect, rather than by the region.

4.7. Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have expanded lessons learned from the analysis of the work of Geoffrey Bawa in the examination of the work of architects in other parts of the world. These analyses have highlighted some distinctive features, the first of which is the preference to articulate common architectural features in their respective places. However, these architects worked with these features without resorting to imitation or to a recreation of the past and the accepted, common practices. Instead, they turned to the very basic ideas behind these features and the formal, perceptual, and experiential qualities of those features. The later also included the symbolic aspects. Hence, houses designed by the Rural Studio always incorporated the big porch and the sloped roof; even in some designs, the entire building was essentially a roof. In the case of Gregory Burgess, the facilities exemplified an attention to the landscape and the creation of a space for rituals, an area central to the structures used by the Aborigines. Mangunwijaya emphasized the notion of the roof as the most important aspect in

Javanese architecture. In addition, he articulated the idea of the roof as an umbrella. In addition to the attention to the roof, Mangunwijaya also accentuated the tectonic expressions of the timber frame structure. Along this vein, these architects retained the representational qualities in their designs. Hence, the designs of the Rural Studio reflected the features of shacks and trailer houses in the South. In the case of Gregory Burgess, the buildings incorporated elements of the landscape and the dreamscape of the Australian Aborigine through their sinuous, zoomorphic forms. Mangunwijaya's buildings brought to mind both the shapes and the scales of Javanese houses and the skyline of Javanese *kampongs*, as well as the tactile and haptic qualities of Javanese houses. In summary, these designs draw attention to the fundamental attributes, the very essence of their respective contexts.

The architects of the designs discussed in this thesis began with similar concerns, that is, close attention and consideration of sites and programs. Following this line of thought, the architects included the available materials and local techniques in their notion of "site." Hence, the Rural Studio developed their design based on a series of *charrette*. In their design processes, members of the Rural Studio devoted to working with materials that could be used for building materials and then determining a way to construct their designs using these materials and conforming to the local environment. Similar to the Rural Studio, Burgess also developed designs through a series of *charrette*. His designs of the two Aboriginal centers exemplified a strong sensitivity to the site, tying the designs in with the surrounding landscape. He also introduced contemporary building techniques to his designs while seeking materials available in the remote locations of each of his projects. Mangunwijaya fit his design of the settlement to the topographic conditions of the site. Furthermore, the architect experimented with the A-frame structure, which foregrounds the notion of the timber tectonic in a way that

differed from that of traditional frame structures in Java. These architects addressed site, programmatic, and tectonic challenges by turning to elements from the past and the everyday practices of the inhabitants of each area.

As with Bawa's architecture, these cases exemplify a design strategy that borrowed elements from the past and from everyday customs, that is, by applying modernist eclecticism. Moreover, they arranged elements into a montage that articulated a sense of unity rather than a collection of images from the past. Hence, these architects turned to ideas embedded in spatial organization, formal arrangement, tectonic aspects, and ornamental and decorative elements. These cases also exemplify a juxtaposition of the past and the present. The latter element, that is, the present, is particularly instructive, since these cases clearly exhibit an engagement with "everyday" life. Mockbee and his pupils incorporated common features of the typical landscape in the South, that is, the shack and the trailer parks and highlighted the use of salvaged materials. In Australia, Burgess strived to animate the folk myths and dreams of the Aboriginal groups that he served. By selecting materials associated with temporality and poverty, Mangunwijaya engaged the features of the houses of the Javanese commoner instead of those of the Javanese nobility. In this way, these designs embody the everyday reality of their environment. They also emphasize the idea behind elements, or type, rather than faithful replications of elements from the past. Hence, in the work of the Rural Studio, the concepts of the big porch and sloped roofs provide a unifying frame for design. Similarly, the ideas of the undulating silhouette in Burgess's work and of the umbrella roof and the timber frame in Mangunwijaya's work reflect underlying ideas derived from the past and the everyday life in Australia and Java, respectively. In this way, these architects were able to take advantage of multiple references in their work,

both local and external. Hence, their designs were based more on personal preferences than on models derived from traditions.

Similar to the case of Geoffrey Bawa, these two cases underscore the notion of a constructed identity that gravitates toward the role of modernist subjectivity. This modern subjectivity actively collocates these overlapping influences. Following this line of thought, the meanings of these buildings come from the actions of these architects. These designs reflect a personal, more autobiographical approach to design. The regions or the contexts in which they worked provided the materials for their designs instead of dictating the way the design had to be executed. In this way, their design strategies allowed these architects not only to establish connections but also to proffer critical commentaries about their contexts. The articulation of the everyday accentuates elements that have often been overlooked. These articulations also illustrate the modernists' preoccupation with the present. Each of these designs bears rich qualities that manifest the broad personal memories of the architects. In a way, as these cases exemplify, modernity does not operate in a vacuum. Instead, it reacts to the situations with which modernity is confronted. In other words, the architect as an agent negotiates the structure in which he or she is in, which involves negotiating the traditional and the contemporary. Their structures then provide a common ground for an understanding of their work. Indeed, these cases exemplify a constellation of traditions, memories, contemporary conditions, and personal traces. Thus, the question asked in Chapter 2-- How do these design strategies fit into the understanding of modernity?—will be answered in Chapter 5.

Notes to Chapter 4:

¹ Bell, Bryan, ed. *Good Deeds, Good Design: Community service through architecture*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001), 12.

² Dean, Andrea Oppenheimer, "The Hero of Hale County: Sam Mockbee," in *Architectural Record*, Vol. 189, issue 2, (Feb. 2001): 75-79.

³ Dean, Andrea Oppenheimer, "Introduction," in *Rural Studio: Samuel Mockbee and architecture of decency*, New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2001, 9; Zook, Jim, "Steeped in the South," in *Metropolis*, (April 1997): 79-83.

⁴ Dean, "Introduction," 9.

⁵ Ibid. 9.

⁶ Indeed, Marshall and Kearney, in their study of contemporary architecture in South Africa, points to the importance of creativity in dealing with available resources to create a strong connection to a place. Marshall, Sabine; Kearney, Brian, *Opportunities for Relevance: Architecture in the New South Africa*, (Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2000). In their study, the authors argue that architects must go beyond visual appearance in achieving architecture that is appropriate to a place. Thus, architects must also be able to take advantage of common practices of a particular locale. In the context of the South Africa, outside the white enclaves, these practices in built environment include the use of salvaged items as a common material for building.

⁷ Osman, Michael, "Benjamin's Baroque," *Thresholds* 28, (Winter 2005): 119-29.

⁸ Buck-Morss, Buck-Morss, S., *The Dialectic of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1989), 161. Further, in his discussion of the German baroque drama, Benjamin points to the distinction between symbolic representation, in which forms are equal to contents and provide sudden illuminations, and allegoric representation, which operates through semantic substitution and depends on suspended illumination unfolding over time. According to Hilde Heynen, Benjamin differentiates symbol, a unity between forms and meanings, and allegory, an arbitrary relation between forms and meanings. Indeed, Benjamin considers allegory as original, since it accepts the fragmentation of the world, rejecting the harmonious condition of the symbol. Allegory, then, is related to the technique of montage, a position that may reflect the affinities between Benjamin and the avant-garde. Heynen, Hilde, *Architecture and Modernity*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1999), 107-17.

⁹ Osman, "Benjamin's Baroque": 122-24

¹⁰ Marshall and Kearney argue that in South Africa, designs with contemporary aesthetics in many Black communities have received warm welcome and helped fostering the sense of pride. Marshall, Kearney, *Opportunities for Relevance*

¹¹ Burgess, Gregory, "The architects Brief," in *A+U*, n.5(320), (May 1997).

¹² Memmott, Paul, *Gunyah, Goondie + Wurley: The Aboriginal architecture of Australia*, (St. Lucia: Univ. of Queensland Press, 2007), 189-92.

¹³ Dovey, Kim, "Architecture About Aborigines," in *Architecture Australia*, Vol. 85, no: 4, (July-Aug. 1996): 98-103.

¹⁴ The Brambuk Living Cultural Centre, (<http://oak.arch.utas.edu.au/projects/aus/163/cbram.html>).

¹⁵ See, among others, Dovey, Kim, "Seeing Uluru," in *Thresholds*, 21, (2000): 60-5 and Burgess, Gregory, "The architects Brief."

¹⁶ Memmott, *Gunyah, Goondie + Wurley*, 213-24.

¹⁷ Ibid., 219.

¹⁸ Ibid., 249.

¹⁹ "The literature on Brambuk Living Center suggest that Aboriginal users and clients of the facility "have seen" a range of ancestors, including cockatoos, eagles, and whales, in its physical form without them being purposefully designed into the building (Fantin, Shaneen, "Aboriginal Identities in Architecture," in *Architecture Australia*, Vol. 92, no. 5 (Sept-Oct 2003): 84)."

²⁰ Samia Rab points to this aspect in her discussion of the Uluru Cultural Center. Rab, Samia, "Rooted Modernity: reconstructing memory in architecture," in Sarah Menin, (ed.), *Constructing Place: Mind and Matter*, (London: Routledge, 2003), 269-72.

²¹ Dovey, "Architecture About Aborigines": 99. However, Dovey warns about the futility of this view which freezes the Aborigines in a time capsule, failing to deal with the influence of modernity.

²² Pronounced "cho-de."

²³ However, this new version of the typology of Javanese architecture, in an idealized version, curiously enough, was the result of Dutch scholarship in architecture of the 1920's, which was handed down to Indonesian architects. See Prijotomo, Joseph, *Ideas and Forms of Javanese Architecture*, (Yogyakarta: Gadjah Mada University, 1984); Tjahjono,

Gunawan, *Cosmos, Center, and Duality in Javanese Architecture*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California at Berkely, 1989.

²⁴ Mangunwijaya, *Wastu Citra*, (Jakarta: P.T. Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1988). The title of the book refers to his effort to provide an Indonesian word for "architecture." Indonesian vocabulary does not have a word for "architecture," indicating the absent of architecture as a discipline in Western term in Indonesian discourses.

²⁵ A more politically programmed use of a certain architectural language to promote a national identity manifested in the government-sponsored program of the construction of more than 500 identical mosque in Indonesia, see: O'Neill, Hugh, "Islamic Architecture under the New Order," Virginia Hooker (ed.), *Culture and Society in New Order Indonesia*, (Singapore: Oxford Univ. Press, 1993).

²⁶ Often, things that we conveniently accept as traditions in our experience are actually recent inventions. See, for example, discussion in Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World: How Globalization is Reshaping Our Lives* (London: Routledge, 2002).

²⁷ Bourdieu, Pierre, "Structure, Habitus, and Practice," [1977] reprinted in Paul Erickson; Liam Murphy (ed.) *Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory*, (New York: Broadview Press, 2001), 539.

²⁸ *ibid.* p.537. Jameson (*Architecture and Ideology*, 1983) understands practices as a dialectical relationship between structuralism and phenomenology.

²⁹ Bourdieu, Pierre, "Structure, Habitus, and Practice," 534.

³⁰ *ibid.*, 540.

³¹ Wright, Gwendolyn, "Dilemmas of Diversity: Vernacular style and High style" *Journal of the Graduate School of Architecture and Planning*, vol. V, (Fall 1984): 120.

³² Anderson, Stanford, "Memory in Architecture," in *Daidalos*, no 58, (Dec. 1995): 23-38, and Anderson, "Memory without Monuments: Vernacular Architecture," *Traditional Dwelling and Settlement Review (TDSR)* Vol. XI, no. 1, (1999): 13-22.

³³ Anderson, Stanford, "Memory in Architecture," 26-28.

³⁴ Anderson elaborates this argument in his second article. See Anderson, "Memory without Monuments: Vernacular Architecture," 13-22.

³⁵ Anderson argues that the so-called "revolutionary" architects, Ledoux, Boullee, and Leque, shifted the understanding of disciplinary memory by focusing on Classical precedents, such temples, not as prototypes to be emulated and transformed but as "the means to evoke archetype, even pure geometries, that assertedly lie behind the cultural model." Anderson, Stanford, "Memory in Architecture," 35.

³⁶ *ibid.*, 24.

³⁷ Anderson, "Memory without Monuments: Vernacular Architecture," 13-22.

³⁸ Anderson points to the notion that in oral societies, memory resides in individuals. These societies, according to scholars, put more emphasis to the present moments, in which cultural traditions were communicated face-to-face within the context of the present. Thus, memory was as important as forgetting. He quotes Jack Goody and Ian Watt, who called this condition as the homeostatic organization. Along this line, Anderson refers to Jacques Le Goff, who argued that collective memories in oral societies operated in a 'generative reconstruction' "that eliminate(s) or transform(ed) those parts of the tradition that are no longer operative." *Ibid.*, 16.

³⁹ He refers to an example in which people labeled styles that are not common anymore as historical, although these styles may not be around only in a couple years. *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 18-19. An example to which he addresses the "vernacular usage" is the work of Luis Barragan, which relates to simplicity in form and the play of light and color in Mexican architecture.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴² Anderson, Stanford, "Architecture and Tradition that Isn't "Tradn, Dad," in, Marcus Whiffen (ed.), *The History, Theory, and Criticism of Architecture: papers from 1964 AIA ACSA Teacher Seminar*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The M.I.T. Press, 1964), 71-89). Anderson suggests that "tradition is a necessary, common dynamic ground upon which we operate (p. 76)." Further, "[t]raditions give us something upon which to operate—means of communication (including, but not restricted to, language) and a body of conventional usages and ideas which are, nevertheless, subject to criticism and change (p. 81)." In this vein, "[t]radition ... is not a mere accumulation of knowledge, an undifferentiated catalog of past events, but rather a vital body of ideas, values, mores, and so forth that we have yet found resistant to criticism (p. 82)." However, "[t]he most treacherous impact of tradition is upon those who seek to escape their tradition, rather than to acknowledge, and reshape it (p. 83)." Along this vein, Anderson considers to type of escapism: literal and uncritical revivalism and the search for utter novelty (p. 83).

⁴³ Canizaro, Vincent B. "The Promise of Regionalism," and Canizaro, "Introduction," in V. Canizaro, (ed.) *Architectural Regionalism: Collected writings on place, identity, modernity, and tradition*, (New York: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007), 10-12; 16-33.

⁴⁴ Tzonis, Alexander; Lefaivre, Liane, coined the term in the article "The Grid and the Pathway," in *Architecture in Greece* 5 (1981).

⁴⁵ Lefaivre, Tzonis, "Critical Regionalism," Spyros Amourgis (ed.) *Critical Regionalism: The Pomona meeting – proceedings*, (Pomona: Coll. of Environmental Design, California State Polytechnic University, 1991), 14. It is understandable that Mumford's discussion (see Chapter 1, 4), which pointing to the notion of homogenization and colonialism, was interpreted as a resistant effort.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, 20

⁴⁷ Frampton, Kenneth, "Prospect for a Critical Regionalism," *Perspecta: The Yale Architectural Journal* 20 (1983): 147-62, reprinted in Kate Nesbitt (ed.), *Theorizing: A new agenda for architecture*, (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1996) 470-71

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 471

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 472

⁵⁰ Frampton, Kenneth, *Modern Architecture: A critical history, 3^d edition*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 372

⁵¹ *ibid.*, 315

⁵² Colquhoun, Alan, "Critique of Regionalism," originally published in *Casabella* (January-February 1996), 50-55; reprinted in V. Canizaro, (ed.) *Architectural Regionalism: Collected writings on place, identity, modernity, and tradition*, (New York: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007), 141-2

⁵³ However, Colquhoun also argues that the development of modern architecture also reflects the influence of the notion of regionalism. Modernism in the early 1920s already demonstrates the trait of regionalism, in which Le Corbusier conflated France regionalism based on Classicism with universalism, implying the use of Mediterraneanism in his architecture characterized by cubic forms and white walls. See Colquhoun, "Critique of Regionalism," 141; and Colquhoun, "The Concept of Regionalism," 147

⁵⁴ Colquhoun, Alan, "The Concept of Regionalism," 150. According to Colquhoun, Romanticism turns to mimesis of the past, a condition that poses a problem since it is not authentic, while the modern movement stresses authenticity.

⁵⁵ "Far from resisting the appropriations of rationalization, it confirms them by suggesting that all that remains of an original, unitary body of regional architecture are shards, fragments, bits and pieces that have been torn from their original context. Taking this view, any attempt to retrieve contents in all their original wholeness would result only in a sort of kitsch. The only possible attitude towards regionalism and the values of Kultur and Gemeinschaft would therefore be one of irony." *ibid.*, 151

⁵⁶ Canizaro, Vincent, *Architectural Regionalism: Collected writings on place, identity, modernity, and tradition*, (New York: Princeton Univ. press, 2007), 128

Chapter 5

The Attitude of Modernity

5.1. Introduction

This chapter aims at exploring the notion of modernity, attempting to uncover ideas, concepts, and limitations that will allow a rendition of the significance of such a notion. This study continues the discussion in Chapter One that touches on the split between the Rationalists and the Romantics. What are the meanings behind the term “modernity?” What other significant ideas relate to the understanding of modernity? Chapter Two and Chapter Four have outlined approaches that incorporate elements from the pasts, including from traditions, in the work of architecture. How can such approach fit into the discussions of modernity? What kind of theories of modernity that can help to frame the discussions in previous chapters?

5.2. Societal and Cultural Modernity

After the end of World War II, nations in Asia and Africa, including Sri Lanka, gained their independence and promptly embarked on efforts to create a modern society with hopes of gaining equality with their former colonial rulers. In this context, the template for a modern society was Western society. The formation of Western societies itself was a complex phenomenon that could be traced back to the Enlightenment. Geographically, this historical phenomenon occurred in Western Europe and North America. However, modern Western society was more of a historical than geographical construct. This historical phenomenon integrated political, economic, social, and cultural factors over a long period of time that eventually shaped modern societies.

The Enlightenment ushered in an era in which knowledge based on empirical observation and rational thought gained ground. Eventually, these approaches to the formulation of knowledge led to the prominence of scientific approaches based on empirical inquiry, manifested at the beginning of science. The implication of the ascendancy of scientific approaches was a new form of authority, that is, authority based on objectivity, empiricism, and rationality. In turn, the reliance on this type of authority eroded traditional forms of authority based on religious dogma. The formation of modern societies in the West encompassed the accumulation of the new form of knowledge based on a positivistic approach in the realms of both nature and social life, triggering the appearance of social science and marking the beginning of secularism, which implied a new organization of society separated from traditional, religious authority. However, scientific approaches and secular knowledge also provoked skepticism, in which everything was cast into doubt and under close scrutiny, including religious beliefs. Eventually, these phenomena led to the separation of knowledge into the realms of ethical, scientific, and aesthetic knowledge, each of which evolved into its own system of logic.

Along with the transformation in the realms of science and culture, Eighteenth Century Europe also witnessed a transformation from a society based on agriculture to one based on industry. The change in the economic base of Western society occurred with the emergence of large-scale capitalistic production systems sustained by advances in technology in the form of the invention of steam-powered machines that supported manufacturing activities. Dominant factors in the economy shifted from the ownership of land that characterized the feudal, agricultural society to the accumulation of capital and the ownership of manufacturing facilities. This shift also prompted the emergence of a consumer society that sustained industrial activities. In social terms, changes in the

economic base of society also reshaped its demographic makeup. In the pre-modern society, most of the population inhabited rural areas, the center of the agricultural economy. However, with the emergence of industrialization, cities became a concentration point for manufacturing activities that drew people from the countryside to the city in the search for jobs. Thus, cities in Western Europe, such as London and Liverpool, developed into metropolises whose basic roles were those of industrial centers. Changes in the demographic structure were also manifested in those in the social makeup of Western society. In the pre-modern era, a society consisted of landowners, made up of both the nobility and religious elites, and land workers, made up of the peasantry. Thus, through the division of labor, industrialization and urbanization led to the formation of two classes in the society: the bourgeoisie, or the owners of capital such as the machinery used in manufacturing, and the proletariat, or laborers earning wages.

Changes also occurred in the political domain, in which political institutions in Europe, and to some extent, America, also underwent significant changes. The Eighteenth Century experienced the emergence of absolutist states, which, in essence, exemplified the consolidation and concentration of power (even though the authority of kings was still based on the belief of divine right). Both the French Revolution and the American Revolution exemplified a new political tendency. The spirit of secularism and rationality based on the positivist approach implied a reorganization of political systems in the Western world, with its distinction in political apparatus and the separation of power. Along this vein, the organizational system adopted a bureaucratic system that benefited from the positivist approach to life. Thus, it witnessed the emergence of nation-states. Culturally, nation-states also fostered a new form of identity, one that was constructed intentionally, prompting the emergence of the notion of “nationalism.” One

way in which this modern form of identity was constructed was the imposition of a national language accompanied by other forms of national culture. In this way, cultures were now defined by political systems and political boundaries. Political and economic factors in the Western world coincided with the continued expansion of colonialism. An older form of colonialism based on the glory of God and kings was replaced with the search for the sources of raw materials as well as for the expansion of markets. Similarly, bureaucratic organization was adopted both in the political and economic domains, based on the hope of achieving efficiency through the rational approach. The formation of modern, Western society was a massive reorganization of social, cultural, political, and economic systems that unfolded over a long period of time. In turn, these processes reverberated throughout every aspect of life, including in art and architecture.

In fact, in the development of modern society, Jurgen Habermas points to a situation in which imposed concepts such as religious dogmas were replaced by the “inner logic of theoretical, aesthetic, and moral-practical problem,” a process of which Max Weber called as a process of disenchantment.¹ This process, as Habermas noted in the work of Durkheim and Herbert Mead, implies the dissolution of traditional life with implications such as the loss of the quasi-natural status of traditions, the universalization of norms and values, and the abstraction of patterns of socialization. He stresses the consequences of the rational view in the emergence of the modern Western societies based on capitalism and bureaucracy.² Further, he underscores the differences between “modernity” and “modernization,” the former being the brainchild of the period of enlightenment and the latter being the development of societies that relied on it as the cult of rationality. These definitions essentially separate modernity from the context of the Enlightenment and frame such a concept in neutral terms regarding spatial and temporal aspects.³ Following this line of thought, Habermas argues that the term

“modernization” was more of a technical term that emerged only in the 1950s, in which the concept of modernization was understood in terms of efforts for economic, political, and social development, focusing on “progress” as its keyword.⁴ This view, he argues further, turns modernity into a universal model that is separated from its Enlightenment context. The hope of the Enlightenment to use rationality to organize social relationships to achieve a better future that is free from injustice is eclipsed by the emphasis on capital and bureaucracy. It marks the separation between the modernization of society and the cultural modernity.⁵

In terms of modernity as the legacy of the Enlightenment, Habermas refers to Hegel, who considered modernity as an epochal concept marked by the discovery of the new world and the arrival of the Renaissance and the Reformation.⁶ The crucial implication of Hegel's epochal view, according to Habermas, is the shift in the perception of time from a view of the future in the religious perspective as the impending arrival of the last day to a secular view, which believed that the future had already arrived with its sense of novelty.⁷ This new sensibility implies the consciousness of the present, reflected in recurrence of words such as “revolution, progress, emancipation, development, crisis, and zeitgeist.”⁸ Thus, this understanding of modernity underlines the theme in which the present was considered a unique phenomenon and the horizon shifted from the future to the present, reflected in the thoughts of both Kant and Hegel. Furthermore, Habermas argues that the consciousness of the present drives the desire to understand modernity and the present in its own terms. He argues that nowhere does this desire appear in its strongest form than in the realm of aesthetic criticism, especially in France in the nineteenth century in the debate between the *ancien* and the *moderne*, which pitted understanding of absolute beauty as opposed to temporal beauty.

Along this line of thought, Dilip Parameswar Gaonkar revisits the distinctions between societal modernity and cultural modernity.⁹ The former brings about cognitive transformations, including the idea of progress that was affected by scientific exploration and social transformation, including the market-driven economy and the emergence of nation states. These transformations relate to new modes of production and the emergence of a new type of subject.¹⁰ At the same time, the notion of progress based on Rationalism also brought standardization, a situation that prompted criticism from Max Weber, who argued that rationality was actually purposive, instrumental, that is, embodying certain aims as its ends. On the other hand, cultural modernity espouses the notion of the cultivation of self, especially the primary role of expression and imagination, a point that also emphasizes the subject. It was epitomized by Charles Baudelaire's efforts to aestheticize modernity to counter its dark sides, which implied the emphasis on the cultivation of the self, and thus the notion of authenticity.

In this line of thought, Michel Foucault argues that Kant's text on the enlightenment is actually a problematization of "today," in which Kant departed from the contemporary understanding of "today" or the present as a specific era, a sign of forthcoming events, or even a transition point.¹¹ According to Foucault, Kant's contemplation on "today" provides a seed for an understanding of modernity, in which Foucault formulates as an attitude rather than a period in history. This attitude is precisely "a mode of relating to contemporary reality; a voluntary choice made by certain people; ... a way of thinking and feeling; a way ... of acting and behaving that at one and the same time marks a relation of belonging and presents itself a task."¹² In short, modernity as an attitude implies a position that problematizes the present. Along this vein, Foucault refers to Charles Baudelaire's piece "The Painter of Modern Life" to articulate the attitude of modernity. Foucault locates some critical points in Baudelaire's

reflections on modernity, the first of which is the view of the discontinuity of time, that is, modernity as a rupture in time. Regarding this moment of change, Foucault points out that the attitude of modernity sought to uncover a constant element.¹³ The second point that Foucault detected in Baudelaire's thoughts was the emphasis in a critical view that the transfigured the current condition through acts of re-imagining the present condition.¹⁴ The third point, according to Foucault, is that the attitude of modernity is not simply a mode of addressing the present but also one of addressing oneself.¹⁵ This view toward self is apparent in Baudelaire's contemplation of the figure of the dandy, who represents an attitude that aims at the invention of the self. According to Walter Benjamin, the dandy reflects a condition of being exposed to the turbulent condition of modern life and is a physiognomy of a strong and ingenious figure who is oblivious to the tensions of modern life.¹⁶ Habermas asserts that Baudelaire portrayed the dandy as a provocative figure who absorbed influences from everyday surroundings and turned them into a surprise.¹⁷ The celebration of oneself points to the notion of self-reflexivity, an ability to look at oneself and to cultivate an original stance in the face of forces of modern life. This last point essentially reverts back to the Kantian view that values the capability of a subject to use one's reason to exercise judgment. As Gaonkar has pointed out, Foucault's assertion of modernity as an attitude bridges Kant's assessment of the Enlightenment and Baudelaire's project.

Modernity as an attitude points to the consideration of a rupture in time that requires re-imagination of the present time, an act that is based on one's ability to exercise judgment free from imposed dogmas. This attitude implies a break with the immediate past which opens up possibilities to explore the distant pasts. This interest in the pasts, however, is not an interest to recreate the past or to look at the past with nostalgia, but instead is an interest in the experiential aspects of the past as an

opportunity to re-imagine the present condition. The emphasis on the capability to use reasons to make judgment informs a specific modernist subjectivity, which allows a subject to explore distant pasts without the dictation of the narrative of history. This subjectivity also opens up the possibility to transfer the pasts from unrelated cultures. The case of Bawa, as with the three other cases that were discussed in Chapter Four, exemplifies this specific modernist subjectivity. Bawa's work articulates a break with the immediate past, that is, the International Style and traditionalism in architecture, and underlines the interests in the distant pasts, that is, architecture of the colonial, the ancient Kandyan, and even the Italian Renaissance. These interests in the past are not for a recreation of traditional architecture of the Sinhalese or colonial architecture of the Dutch and the Portuguese. Instead, they are intentional design decisions that are taken to meet present challenges. Instead of based on traditional rules, these decisions are guided by Bawa's own judgment on the appropriateness of the elements from the pasts. It points to the notion that the allusion to multiple, overlaid cultural images in his architecture is actually a constructed memory, an act of a modern subject. Further, this attitude to a specific modernist subjectivity also informs the clients and the users of the buildings, as they are invited to be aware of these constructions of memories through the montage of elements in his designs.

5.3. Time, History and Tradition

To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it "the way it really was" (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. Historical materialism wishes to retain that image of the past which unexpectedly appears to man singled out by history at a moment of danger. The danger affects both the content of the tradition and its receiver. The same threat hangs over both: that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. In every era the attempt must be made anew to wrest tradition away from a conformism that is about to overpower it. The Messiah comes not only as a redeemer, he comes as the subduer of Antichrist. Only that historian will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past who is firmly convinced that even the dead will not be safe from the enemy if he wins. And this enemy has not ceased to be victorious.¹⁸

Modernization assumes an understanding of time as a linear progression in which every society would evolve through stages of development based on rational organization of capital and bureaucracy. Such a view of time imposes a teleological view of stages in history that would culminate in the end of history. In this context, Walter Benjamin has problematized the teleological view of time. Rolf Tiedemann has pointed to the metaphysical and theological tones in Benjamin thoughts, which emphasize the notion of origin, of being, instead of genesis, of becoming.¹⁹ Michael Osman explains the notion of the origin of Benjamin's view as a point in time in which the past and the future are suspended, instead of the notion of linear development.²⁰ Habermas argues that an emphasis on the notion of origin exemplifies the concept of the Messianic time that Benjamin followed, forming a concept that he termed the "now-time."²¹ Benjamin refers to an argument from Karl Marx, who pointed out that efforts by Robespierre to refer to and to quote from the Romans implied a correspondence between the French Revolution and the Roman Republic.²² Such a correspondence, in Benjamin's Messianic perspective, indicates that history is actually made up of various corresponding moments in time. These particular moments are those that referred to as the "now-time," in which "the authentic moment of an innovative present interrupts the continuum of history and breaks away from the homogenous flow."²³ Osman argues that Benjamin's view also betrays the influence of the monad theory of Gottfried Leibniz, in which monad is "a substance without parts," that "contains the infinite multiplicity of all other monads."²⁴ Benjamin himself puts forward his view in the Arcade project that history is a monadological structure in which specific characters of a monad would react to the conditions of the day.²⁵ Benjamin's view of time and history is a synchronic view in which time is characterized by independent moments that may be similar to monads. Such a monad is fed by both the past and the future, in which the flow of time is

suspended. This perspective allows Benjamin to consider as a moment of suspension the Baroque and Paris of the nineteenth century, similar to the relationship between the French Revolution and the Roman Republic.

Underlying this view of the similarities in history is Benjamin's consideration of the relationship between culture and society, a view that is informed by the Surrealists.²⁶ As the basis of his *Arcade Project*, Benjamin considers that culture is a form of expression of the economic development of a society instead of as a reflection of the economic relationships as many Marxist commentators would believe.²⁷ Thus, this expression is an expression of the *ur-phenomenon*, the primary phenomenon that underlies everything. Thus, Margaret Cohen claims that Benjamin transforms Sigmund Freud's approaches to psycho-analysis that the Surrealist used to a collective body.²⁸ In line with Susan Buck-Morss, Cohen asserts that Benjamin suggests that the relationship between the base-structure and the super-structure could be understood through a Freudian filter in which the base-structure is the collective dream of a classless society while the superstructure is the wish images. Benjamin's agenda, inspired by that of the Surrealists, is to criticize the fixation to the notion of progress in the understanding to modernity, as articulated in his passage:

It may be considered one of the methodological objectives of this work to demonstrate a historical materialism which has annihilated within itself the idea of progress. Just here, historical materialism has every reason to distinguish itself sharply from bourgeois habits of thoughts. Its founding concept is not progress but actualization. [N2, 2]²⁹

It also reiterates his view that cultures are a form of actualization, hence expressions of factors that operate in a society, rather than a replication or a representation of the notion of progress. Tiedemann argues that Benjamin resists the notion of progress as the

“signature of historical process,” noting that progress in terms of technology does not correspond to the progress of humanity, a view that was reflected in his contemplation on Paul Klee’s *Angelus Novus*.³⁰ In this way, Benjamin posits his critique on Weber’s view of the “iron cage” condition, which characterized a modern world in which rationality, represented by the notion of progress, occupied a primary place.³¹ This criticism also takes a swipe at vulgar Marxism, which emphasizes a causal relationship that economic processes impose on social processes.

In this contemplation on history, the notion of tradition becomes prevalent. If history is seen as a constant repetition in which the past has been defined by the present, Benjamin views tradition from a different angle. As Hannah Arendt puts it, the past possesses authority as it is transmitted as tradition, and authority becomes a tradition as it presents itself historically.³² According to Terry Eagleton, Benjamin sees tradition, as opposed from history, as a complex constellation that is “non-linear, non-discrete and not in a grid of relations.”³³ Tiedemann points out that Benjamin essentially considers history in terms of constellation, which allows the past to coincide with the present in his notion of “now recognizability.”³⁴ In a way, tradition eludes the linear construction of history, presenting itself at any given time. In Arendt’s words, this characteristic of tradition allows itself to be a medium of truth, and truth has been situated according to particularities, becoming wisdom. Thus, according to Eagleton, tradition transmits situations instead of things, let alone monuments, and strategies that construct and mobilize such things.³⁵ Indeed, Marx has asserted that the aim of revolutions is the creation of the future, but the future cannot be created out of nothingness.³⁶ This view of tradition fits into Benjamin’s construct of time as monads.

The problem of the past in Benjamin's construct may be best illustrated in Habermas' discussion of the notion of the horizon of expectation.³⁷ Habermas refers to Reinhart Koselleck, who argued that societal modernization in Europe distanced peasants and craftsmen from their space of experience that was fixed in the past but replaced by experiences of progress with its own horizon of expectations based on utopia. Habermas argues that such an understanding ensures the stability of the future, and avoids disruption by setting up a teleological path in which the future has been objectified and in which the task of historians is to fill in the trajectory of time with masses of facts, which are precisely the aim of Benjamin's criticism.³⁸ Habermas asserts that this type of historical consciousness appropriated the past for the future in two ways: a fixation on the horizon of expectation with an orientation to the future and the prevalence of the notion of continuity, of the effective-historical bond that placed everything in its track.³⁹ Instead, according to Habermas, Benjamin proposes that the pasts were unfulfilled expectations and the future-oriented present had the expectation as experiences of corresponding pasts through acts of remembering.⁴⁰ In other words, Benjamin foregrounds the notion of the redemption of the past as an unfulfilled situation. He also stresses the notion of correspondence in time events such as monad, which may resemble one another. Benjamin shows both the possibility of charting a new territory in the notion of the new barbarism⁴¹ and the possibility of engaging culture. In this perspective of redemption, the past is redeemed in order to dissolve guilt about the past. In Habermas's point of view, Benjamin shifts the horizon of experience from a shaped horizon that Koselleck has shown to an experience in which the past is considered an unfulfilled future.⁴²

In relation to this correspondence in time, Susan Buck-Morss argues that Benjamin problematizes phenomena in which new innovations appear in mimicking old

forms such as in photography, which mimics painting and the form of the first electric bulb, which mimicked gas light.⁴³ According to Buck-Morss, the semblance of the past mirrors the economic condition that existing modes of production conform to, establishing a Capitalist economic relationship, despite technological advances. Benjamin recognizes that in this masking of new innovations with old, fantastic forms take shape as an articulation of collective dreams that need to be mediated with new materials. The fairy tale simile in archaic imageries points to the longing for a condition of the end of material scarcity and human exploitation. However, Benjamin does not argue for the recreation of an archaic image. Instead, he claims that such images act as sources of motivation. However, the problem that Benjamin detected in this phenomenon is its capability to mediate the collective dreams to achieve utopian goals. In a way, in Buck-Morss's interpretation, the constant presence of the past is a reflection of the longing for a condition in the past that is supposed to be free from exploitation, a condition in which humans can live in its fullness. This ideal condition appears continuously in human history, such as in fairy tales and fantasy.⁴⁴

Thus, in Benjamin's view, history is a linear, diachronic construct that essentially contains repetitions of the past. In this construct, the past has been assigned its place through the gaze of the victors, a perspective that illuminates Benjamin's view of history as an order established by those who have the upper hand.⁴⁵ In Benjamin's view, the notion of the eternal recurrence creates a condition in which history is an endless repetition of similarities, creating a sense of emptiness resulting from constant monotony. History also implies the notion of universality, in which the rules that govern history will apply in every locale. It also hints at the notion of progress. On the other hand, tradition contains memories of the past that stand outside the construct of history, a synchronic construct. In other words, tradition stands outside the network of the construct that the

victors assigned to history. In addition, it also eludes the universal characteristics of history, for it deals with particularities. Tradition implies the heterogeneity instead of the homogeneity of history. It also maintains the distance of the past, the source of its authority. Benjamin's view of history is essentially a critique of the notion of progress as embedded in the view of history as a universal progression of mankind. Furthermore, he also criticizes the notion of universality. Instead, he advocates a recognition of particularities as embedded in traditions. Traditions, in this sense, could be understood as everyday praxis that still exists in societies in the face of the advance of the process of modernization. The discussion of study cases in this dissertation so far has pointed to the use of language from the pasts or the language of tradition. The use of the language from the past precisely highlights the critical dimension of these examples. In the case of the work of Geoffrey Bawa, his architecture articulates the efforts to turn to a heterogeneous past that is inclusive to multiple traditions in the island as well as from other cultures. Cases in Chapter Four also articulate a similar trait. Bawa also turns to everyday practice in architecture in the island and in the use of low-key technology in construction industries. In this way, Bawa's architecture is a critique of the notion of progress in architecture which is often associated with the use abstraction, the reliance to new, industrial materials and technology, and an attitude toward universality.

5.4. Traditions and Experiences

The consideration of tradition articulates the notion of memory. This notion of memory in Benjamin's discussion, are precisely the concerns of Baudelaire, Marcel Proust, and Henri Bergson. Habermas asserts that Benjamin's notion of the "now-time" implies that the understanding of the new in the future is only possible through "remembering a past that has been suppressed."⁴⁶ Following this line of thought, Benjamin identifies the relationship between experience and tradition. Discussing the

work of Bergson, Benjamin argues that a tradition is a body of experience that includes both personal and communal experiences and that traditions differ from the notion of the homogenous history in which traditions contain memories that avert the authoritative construct of history.⁴⁷ These memories that tradition carries are essentially traces of experiences accumulated over time, experiences that do not necessarily fit into a chronological and teleological construct of history. In this line of thought, Benjamin explores the notion of experiences and memories in his contemplation of tales and storytellers.⁴⁸ Tales, indeed, are embodiment of collective experiences that are transparent to the society they belong to. This condition guarantees the durability of tales over time. However, the transmission of meanings of tales through storytelling also invokes varieties of interpretations in parts of the audience, hence active participations. Precision is not the aim of storytelling, as literal explanation is avoided. This transmission also depends on the imprints of the storytellers, much in the same way as craftsmen leave their mark on their work. It hints to the accumulation of experiences in parts of the craftsmen or the storyteller, marks of the passage of time. Indeed, traces of experience lend to the authority of storytellers. However, Benjamin argues that the advance of societal modernity has caused the decline of the art storytelling. The advance of modernization leads to the transformation in the form of communication, in which photographic re-telling and exact replications of information are valued more. He points out that the decline of storytelling indicates a devaluation of experience, resulting in the loss of the capability to communicate experiences.⁴⁹

In discussing memories, Benjamin points to distinctions made by Henri Bergson between the active life (*vita activa*) and the contemplative life (*vita contemplativa*), both of which form human memories.⁵⁰ Bergson implies that the subject can afford to organize his or her memories, selecting the active and the contemplative parts of

memories.⁵¹ Indeed, the authority of the subject to command his or her memories is the subject of Proust's criticism, in which he argues that humans may not be able to cope with all stimuli, leaving the organization of memories as a matter of chance, sorted into voluntary (*memoire involontaire*) and involuntary memories (*memoire volontaire*).⁵² In an effort to understand the mechanism that controls voluntary and involuntary memories, Benjamin turns to the writings of Sigmund Freud.⁵³ Freud argues that consciousness dissects experience into "remembrance" and "memory," in which many fragments of memory slip into unconsciousness, which is "often most powerful and most enduring when the incident left behind was one that never entered consciousness."⁵⁴ In a Proustian understanding, these fragments of memory that are not registered as an experience can become components of *memoire involontaire*.⁵⁵ This mechanism, according to Freud, is developed as a protection against stimuli, the "shocks" in contemporary life.⁵⁶ Thus, in Freud's concept, consciousness acts as an agent that selects and filters events that the human has lived through, parts of which form the memory. However, but most of them, particularly if they are related to shock or inconveniences in life, slip into the territory of the unconscious, which, in Proustian terms, forms involuntary memory. This mechanism that controls stimuli is accompanied by training in coping with stimuli. The implication of Freud's view is that consciousness controls the reception of stimuli, particularly shocks.⁵⁷

Benjamin also discusses the separation between fleeting sensations (*erlebnis*) and the true realm of experience, which is also collective remembrance (*erfahrung*).⁵⁸ Indeed, expanding Freud's notion, Benjamin argues that consciousness acts as a veil in coping with streams of stimuli; the veil prevents most of the stimuli from entering the realm of experience (*erfahrung*), turning them instead into fleeting sensations.⁵⁹ In a way, the organization of memories is as much an act of forgetting as it is of retaining the

stimuli, a mechanism that Benjamin understands as the production of recurring sudden starts, which, with the loss of the capabilities of remembering previous events, forces a subject to always start fresh.⁶⁰ However, once this mechanism of a shock defense fails, the failure will produce a sensation of fear or anxiety.⁶¹ In a way, the creative process is a resistance against the disintegration of experience against the mechanism that fragments experiences and sorts the fragments into parts of consciousness and unconsciousness, voluntary and involuntary memory, into *erlebnis* and *erfahrung*; attempting instead to maintain the wholeness and integrity of an experience.

According to Richard Wolin, the aspect of experience is the important aspect that Benjamin grasps in the works of Baudelaire and Proust. Proust's works exploit the stream of *memoire involuntaire*, which is capable of recapturing the wealth of experience exemplified in the scent of madeleine, which provokes a chain reaction of memory, which, in Benjamin's words, synthetically recreates experiences.⁶² Indeed, in his reflections on Proust's works, Benjamin argues that his writing is not about the memory of the experience, but about the recovery of the memory, of *memoire involuntaire*, because the latter is filled with infinite possibilities.⁶³ Thus, remembering as an act of the reconstruction of an experience is similar to the process of photographic reconstruction, the delivery of information in the modern age, while Proust's attempts to recover memory are actually acts of re-imagination that can assume different starting points. Benjamin also claims that Proust sought to recover happiness, in which he distinguished between "hymnic" happiness, a sudden eruption of joy at a particular moment, and "elegiac" happiness, the eternal restoration of the original.⁶⁴ Hence, Proust, through his works, aims to rejuvenate the original, an actualization of memories, instead of a reflection or a reconstruction of the original; in other words, he wants to charge life with awareness, the return of experiences.⁶⁵ Through this understanding, Benjamin recognizes the

importance that Proust assigned to every subject as a preserve of memory.⁶⁶ It seems that Benjamin uses work of Proust as a way for him to underline his view of time as a monadological construct. Further, it also provides him with a way to argue that the actualization of memories, which he called “awakening,” is a critique to notion of history as a continuous, teleological construct.⁶⁷ Hence, it underlines the revolutionary potentials of such an approach.

In these efforts to recover memories, according to Benjamin, Proust recognizes attempts of Baudelaire to capture experiences in full in his notion of *correspondances*. Instead of seeing time as a homogenous passage, Benjamin points out that Baudelaire considered that the passage of time contains some meaningful days, particularly days of festivals.⁶⁸ Such days are gateways to redeeming the past, the monads in Benjamin's perspective of the messianic time. The significance of the festival days lies in the notion that these days were actually days of rituals through which the memories of ancient life and time were reenacted.⁶⁹ Festivals connect us with the memory of ancestors—memory that we haven't lived ourselves, but that does not have a history assigned to a particular chronological time; it focuses on the reenactment of collective memories, of primal memories. These memories are free from chronological time, just as Benjamin considers tradition as a form of memory that exists beyond history.⁷⁰ Thus, discussing the concepts of Proust and Baudelaire, Benjamin recognizes Proust's attempts to evoke remembrance by way of chance while Baudelaire attempts to achieve this restorative aspect in a transcendental way.⁷¹ Hence, Baudelaire aims at the re-actualization of ancient, collective memories as they run through the vein of festive days.

Benjamin argues that the notion of memory essentially points to the act of re-imagination. Further, this re-imagination unfolds the often neglected parts of the past.

This strategy that aim for the actualization of memories also articulates another side of the critique of history as a narrative of progress. It points to the notion of abstraction that is implied in the formation of the narrative of history, as opposed to the richness of engagement of traditions.⁷² By making analogies of flying and walking, Benjamin points to the distinctions between abstractions and experiences. Flying over a landscape is similar to a survey of history, applying an overall structure. In contrast, the analogy to walking in a country road points to the aspect of hands-on experiences. It reflects the richness of everyday life. Benjamin underlines this thought further in his distinction between the artist as a magician and the artist as a surgeon.⁷³ The former keeps his object at a distance, gazing at it in its entirety. By contrast, the surgeon plunges his hands deep inside the body of the patient, feeling the cavity as he moves his hands about in surgery, and thus experiencing the fullness of the object. In this way, the attitude of modernity privileges engagements with particularities rather than with the overall narrative of history. The notion of resurrecting the experience of the pasts is precisely the theme that is raised in the discussions of study cases in this dissertation. Bawa uses typological elements from colonial and traditional architecture, which focused on the formal and perceptual qualities instead of abstraction, that are organized through the promenade as a way to resurrect experiences of the Italian gardens and the Dutch and Portuguese colonial mansions. Study cases discussed in Chapter Four also aims at resurrecting experiences of specific locales, whether that is the Deep South, the dreamscape of the Australian Aborigines, or the Javanese kampongs, without returning to traditionalism.

5. 5. Resurrecting experiences

In discussing tradition and memories, Benjamin already implies the presence of an authority that sanctified articles from the past. Following this line of thought,

Benjamin advances one of his concepts on the works of art: the notion of “aura.” In his discussion of Proust and Baudelaire, Benjamin argues that aura is at home in the *memoire involontaire* in much the same way as the experienced hands create a felt presence in the work of art through practice.⁷⁴ He sees a danger in the advance of the mechanization of production, which does not allow the development of experienced hands through practice, but instead replaces it with factory workers who act like automatons. Benjamin goes on to argue that mechanization hampers the use of imagination because every step involved in it has been programmed and rationalized.⁷⁵ Returning to his discussion of novels and tales and his reflections on *memoire involontaire* and *correspondance*, Benjamin defines an object as having an aura with an animate quality that enables viewers to resurrect the stream of memories of experiences.⁷⁶ The aura resides in an image that stimulates our recollections of *memoire involontaire*, creating a sense of *correspondances*. By animating a work of art, aura enables us to sense that it returns our gaze. The distance established by time grants an object this auratic authority, and hence the essence of the creation of traditions.⁷⁷

Benjamin also discusses the notion of aura in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” in which he applauds the advances of mechanical reproduction that in effect destroys the aura, which endows works such as paintings with authority, and substitutes it with a revolutionary development that allows works of art to spread to the masses, a thought that he also reiterates in his discussion of photography.⁷⁸ In this article, Benjamin argues that the aura implies the notion of semblance and the distance in time and place.⁷⁹ He also argues that the advance of mechanical development obliterates such distances but then raises the issue of a novel approach to the notion of aura in his distinction between photography-as-art and art-as-

photography, the latter of which emphasizes the social aspect of the new development, a possible realm for the development of a new sense of aura. In this realm of art-as-photography, Benjamin celebrates the emergence of a pocket camera as a way to lend a sense of authenticity to a photograph—a novel sensibility to aura.⁸⁰ Eagleton has reminded us that Benjamin's notion of aura does not simply celebrate tradition or the past but that it implies that auratic works of art require an active audience, just as a story is a hybrid between the auratic and the mechanically reproduced, because stories require that a listener reconstruct the tale.⁸¹ Moreover, an auratic experience, according to Eagleton, can only be a recollection, prompting the artist to take this challenge as his task.⁸²

Benjamin's critique on the notion of progress poses a problem with his notion of aura, in which mechanical progress is at odds with the notion of aura of the past. Benjamin seems to seek answers to the crisis of the aura in the work of the Surrealists, whom he suggests exposed their energies in the shadow of the ordinary in the deserted streets of Paris.⁸³ In his discussion on photography, Benjamin attempts to locate the source of inspiration for the Surrealists in the photographs of Eugene Atget, who achieved fame later on by capturing the deserted cities.⁸⁴ Benjamin uses the example of Atget's photography, as well as buildings from the past, as way to argue that ordinary and everyday objects have the capacity to allow us to read culture as a form of expression as he has argued.⁸⁵ Along this line of thought, Benjamin argues that experience that the Surrealists revealed in their work is what Benjamin called the "profane illumination."⁸⁶ By replacing religious illumination, which he believed had become obsolete in the advance of modernity, the Surrealists, in Benjamin's view, offered a new way to experience the world based on the notion that freedom is unhindered by pragmatic considerations, including the idea of material progress.⁸⁷

Embedded in his notion of profane illumination is his idea of the dialectical image.

Tiedemann explains that Benjamin relates his notion of the dialectical image with his view of history as a constellation in which the past coincides with and can be recognized in the present, the “now-recognizable.” Precisely, this configuration of the past and the present refers to the dialectical image, or the “dialectic at a standstill.”⁸⁸ In 1935, Benjamin describes it as “dream and wish images in the collective subconscious, whose ‘image-making fantasy, which was stimulated by the new’ should refer back to the Ur-past.”⁸⁹ In 1940, Benjamin elaborated on the dialectical image as a method of capturing the moment, of halting the flow of the movement, “of grasping each becoming as being.”⁹⁰ In the juxtaposition of the past and the present, Benjamin writes

It's not that what is past casts its light on what is present, or what is present is light on what is past; rather, image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent.—Only dialectical image are genuine images (that is, not archaic); and the place where one encounters them is language. —Awakening- [N2a, 3]⁹¹

In this passage, Benjamin returns to his argument that the reactivation of memories carries a potential for critique or as he call it, “awakening.” As mentioned previously in this chapter, Cohen argues that the wish image is an expression of collective dreams. She argues along these same lines that the wish image can be transformed into a dialectical image, a task that should be done by critics.⁹² Tiedemann argues that the dialectical image opens up traces of the past from the detritus of history in order to redeem the past.⁹³ Dialectical imagination seems to refer to the immediate presence of the past in the present; thus, it reveals the wish image, such as in the arcades, which contain unfulfilled wishes conditioned by contemporary technology and the industrial regime. Habermas points out that another example of the dialectical image is the frock coat of the nineteenth century.⁹⁴ In a way, this view suggests that the dark frock coat,

which embodies traces from the past, was a form of expression instead of one of reflection, of the aspiration of people in the nineteenth century.

Thus, the analysis of the dialectical images aims at revealing the situation that conditioned history. Benjamin's approaches become critical, liberating history from the mythological orientation to the past as well as from the appropriation of the future. Thus, he intends to save the past, seen as the unfulfilled, from the hold of the now or the present condition, held under the sway of industrial order and capitalism. His analysis aims to lay bare this hold and let the unfulfilled dream of collective wishes come to the forefront. As he is interested in only revealing situations that condition the present, he views history in a synchronic manner. Along this vein, Jurgen Habermas stated that "the project of modernity aims at a differentiated relinking of modern culture with an everyday praxis that still depend on vital heritages, but would be impoverished through mere traditionalism."⁹⁵ This passage essentially captures the attitude to particularities as a way to relieve the present from the narrative of progress as well as from nostalgia. The analysis of the work of Geoffrey Bawa reveals his combination of modernist sensibilities and modernist approaches with the use of elements from the past. In a way, Bawa's architecture could be analogous to the dark frock coat of the nineteenth century. They incorporate everyday elements, mass-produced elements, and features from the past. This construct expresses the aspirations to the present and the future that are rooted to the contemporary reality as well as to wisdoms from the past. This architecture is a form of an expression of modernity instead of a reflection of the process of modernization.

5.6. Concluding Remarks

In discussing modernity, a distinction should be made between societal modernity and cultural modernity, both of which are rooted in the Enlightenment. The

former is related to transformations in the cognitive realm, manifested in the idea of progress, scientific explorations, and socio-economic transformations. It has become a set of ideas that informed the social, economic, and political and processes, manifested, among others, in the notion of developmentalism and of progress in the second half of the twentieth century. In other word, it is the process of modernization. However, societal modernity brought with it phenomena of routinization and standardization as consequences of the emphasis on the development of capital and bureaucracy. In essence, this condition reflects the notion of mechanical efficiency in which the process itself has become the prime concern. It has led to criticism that the project of the Enlightenment also brought with it a negative side in the impoverishment of human life and the dominance of the system. Societal modernity also assumes a universal view of the world, in which every society would embark on a similar path of economic and materials progress.

On the other hand, the notion of cultural modernity relates to the aesthetic realm, which focused on expressions and imagination of a subject. Essentially, it celebrates the subject, tying it back to the context of the Enlightenment that values the exercise of reasons for judgment. It is a reaction to the dark side that the process of modernization, hence societal modernity, has unleashed on everyday life. In the nineteenth century it was epitomized in the writing of Charles Baudelaire which focused on the problematization of the present and on the cultivation of the self. Lessons from the spirit of the Enlightenment and from Baudelaire's endeavors lead Michel Foucault to formulate that modernity is an attitude that is rooted in the exercise of judgment and that asks for a critical assessment of the present, which implies a re-imagination of the present. This attitude toward the present signifies a rupture with the immediate past. The critical element in this attitude asks for exploration and transformation and for self-reflexivity,

including looking back at the past. By looking back the pass, it comes into the issue of the consideration of time. Hence, modernity is characterized by a rupture or a break with the immediate past, explorations and transformations, and self-reflexivity that hinges of personal expressions of experiences. The rupture with the immediate past paves the way for the opening up of the *ur-phenomenon*.

In this line of thought, the attitude of modernity is a critique of the notion of history as a story of material progress that espouses universality. Instead of a diachronic view of history that implies an evolutionary trajectory that every society must embark, it considers a synchronic view of history that resists such a singular line that selects and assigns the pasts to fit a narrative of a progressive evolution. The attitude of modernity values tradition as communal wisdom and multiplicity of truths. In other words, it values particularities, even personal histories, over universal history. It redeems the particulars, that is, the pasts that are beyond the grand narrative of history. It also means considerations of the ordinary in everyday life. In this relationship to the past, it points to acts of collecting and borrowing from the past. However, this attitude resists the temptation to recreate the past. Instead, the aim is to actualization of experiences of the pasts. The Surrealists provided a lesson of opening up a dream world of reality through the profane illumination, taking on ordinary, everyday experiences and opening up the revolutionary energy contained in them, the collective memories of the ancient pasts inherent in them. It is a way to show that the refuse or the neglected everyday objects are indeed capable of resurrecting a stream of *memoire involontaire*. This strategy, however, necessitates the imaginary capacity of an artist to collect and arrange objects from his surroundings and to assign meanings. In this way, the attitude of modernity returns to the premise of the free use of one's reason for judgment to reconnect with everyday life that includes the richness of memories and the ordinary. In doing so, it

avoids the codification of memories and the past in the form of linear, universal history, stressing instead on synchronic strategies that appeal to the emotional aspect through re-imagination of the pasts.

This dissertation has presented study cases from the oeuvre of Geoffrey Bawa, as well as three other comparative cases from different places. These works exemplify modernity as an attitude. The way to understand modernity in these works is through the understanding of cultural modernity, that emphasizes the construction of a specific modernist subjectivity. It values the use of judgment in dealing with elements afforded by a location that include social, cultural, and historical influences. It maintains a critical distance to the pasts that allows for the transfer of the pasts from unrelated cultures, hence an eclectic modernist. This distance maintained with the past, including tradition, also opens up the possibilities for these architects to critically explore these elements instead of simply following rules embedded in such elements. This critical approach to the pasts, including to tradition, allows them to create their own rules in design or axiom, which essentially confirms the role of a modern subject. This form of modernist subjectivity values traditions and the pasts, not for the sake of traditionalism and nostalgia, but instead for the sake of particular experiential qualities that posed a critique to the notions of universality and of anonymity that are implied in the universality of the process of modernization. In this way, this kind of modernity is also a form of critique of the notion of progress.

Notes to Chapter 5:

¹ Habermas, Jürgen, "Modernity's Consciousness of Time and Its Need for Self-Reassurance," in Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, Frederick G. Lawrence, transl. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1987), 1-3.

² Weber argues that the process of specialization in culture, autonomy, causes the distance between the experts and the laypersons. This process begins with the effect of cultural modernity in the separation of "substantive reason"—formerly in religion and metaphysics that had fallen apart—into science, morality, and art. Problems associated with religion then are organized as questions in truth, normative rightness, authenticity, and beauty; which lead to the institutionalization of "scientific discourse, theories of morality, jurisprudence, and the production and criticism of art. This institutionalization gives way to the emergence of professions, thus specialists, which in turn expose the "intrinsic structures of each dimension," those are: cognitive-instrumental, moral-practical, and aesthetic-expressive rationality. In other words, each sphere has its own rationality. These specialists, who are adept in their own field, are detached from the population and from the everyday life (Habermas, "Modernity—An Incomplete project," 9).

³ Habermas, "Modernity's Consciousness of Time," 4-5.

⁴ "the formation of capital and mobilization of resources," the development of labor forces, the formation of "centralized political power and national identities," secularization of values and norms, and mass political participation," Ibid., 2.

⁵ Habermas refers to Arnold Gehlen, who argues that "the premises of the Enlightenment are dead, only their consequences continue on," Ibid., 3.

⁶ Ibid., 4-5.

⁷ "an epoch that live for the future (and) opens itself up to the novelty of the future" (Ibid., 5).

⁸ Ibid., 7.

⁹ Gaonkar, Dilip Parameswar, "On Alternative Modernities," in *Public Culture* 11(1), (1999): 1-8.

¹⁰ In addition, Gaonkar points to Karl Marx, who argued that the bourgeois steered the advance of the modern age through their control of modes of production. This control brought about progress through continuous innovation, competition, and other destructive and creative change. This progress, in turn, transformed all fixed forms of relationships in societies, including religion, administration, and social class. Ibid. 1-8,

¹¹ Foucault, Michel, "What is Enlightenment," In M. Foucault and Paul Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader*, (New York: Pantheon, 1984).

¹² Foucault, "What is Enlightenment," 39.

¹³ "being modern does not lie in recognizing and accepting this movement; on the contrary, it lies in adopting a certain attitude with respect to this movement; and this deliberate, difficult attitude consists in recapturing something eternal that is not beyond the present instant, nor behind it, but within it." Ibid, 39.

¹⁴ Foucault articulates Baudelaire's conception, saying that "for the attitude of modernity, the high value of the present is indissociable from a desperate eagerness to imagine it, to imagine it as something other than what it is, and to transform it not by destroying it but by grasping it in what it is. According to Baudelaire, modernity is an exercise in which extreme attention to what is real is confronted with the practice of a liberty that simultaneously respects this reality and violates it." Ibid, 41.

¹⁵ "Modernity for Baudelaire is not simply a form of relationship to the present; it is also a mode of relationship that has to be established with oneself." Ibid. 41.

¹⁶ Benjamin, "Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire," in *The Writer of Modern Life*, 124-5.

¹⁷ The role of the dandy was to "(turn) this type of passively experienced extraordinariness to the offensive, in demonstrating the extraordinary by provocative means. The dandy combines the indolent and the fashionable with the pleasure of causing surprise in others while never showing any of himself (Habermas, "Modernity's Consciousness of Time," 10)."

¹⁸ Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 255.

¹⁹ Tiedemann, Rolf, "Dialectics at a Standstill," in Benjamin, *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1999), 939-40.

²⁰ Osman, Michael, "Benjamin's Baroque," in *Thresholds*, 28, (Winter 2005): 119-120

²¹ Habermas, 1987, "Modernity's Consciousness of Time," 10-11.

²² Benjamin, Thesis XIV, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 261.

²³ Habermas, 1987, "Modernity's Consciousness of Time," 11.

²⁴ Osman, "Benjamin's Baroque," 119-20.

²⁵ "For the materialist historian, every epoch with which he occupies himself is only prehistory for the epoch he himself must live in. And so, for him, there can be no appearance of repetition in history, since precisely those moments in the

course of history which matters most to him, by virtue of their index as "fore-history," become moments of the present day and change their specific character according to the catastrophic triumphant nature of that day. [N9a, 8]," Benjamin, "Konvolut N [On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress]," *The Arcade Project*, 474. See also, "If the object of history is blasted out the continuum of historical succession, it is because its monadological structure demands it. This structure first comes into light in the extracted object itself. And does so in the form of the historical confrontation that makes up the interior (and, as it were, the bowels) of the historical object, and into which all the forces and interests of history enter on a reduced scale. It is owing to this monadological structure that the historical object finds represented in its interior its own fore-history and after-history. (Thus, for example, the fore-history of Baudelaire, as educed by current scholarship, resides in allegory; his after-history, in Jugendstil.) [N10,3]," *ibid.*, 475.

²⁶ Also briefly mentioned in Habermas "Modernity—An Incomplete project," 5. Margaret Cohen argues that Benjamin, influenced by the Surrealists, engages in a Marxist analysis that focuses on the "irrational aspects of social processes." See Cohen, Margaret, *Profane Illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Surrealist Revolution*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 5.

²⁷ "Marx lays bare the causal connection between economy and culture. For us, what matter is the thread of expression. It is not the economic origins of culture that will be presented, but the expression of the economy in its culture. At issue, in other words, is the attempt to grasp an economic process as perceptible Ur-phenomenon, from out of which proceed all manifestations of life in the arcades (and, accordingly, in the nineteenth century). [N1a, 6]," Benjamin, "Konvolut N [On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress]," *The Arcade Project*, 460. In Susan Buck-Morss's view, the ur-phenomenon is a longing for a classless society.

²⁸ Cohen, *Profane Illumination*, 22-25.

²⁹ Benjamin, "Konvolut N [On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress]," *The Arcade Project*, 460. Also, "Overcoming the concept of "progress" and overcoming the concept of "period of decline" are two sides of one and same thing. [N2, 5]," *ibid.*, 460

³⁰ Tiedemann, "Dialectics at a Standstill," 941.

³¹ Richard Wolin asserts that Benjamin is also influenced by the German Kulturkritik, which pitted the notion *zivilization*, the material world of the bourgeois order against *kultur*, the refined aspect, in which the former reign supreme (Wollin, Richard "Experience and Materialism in Benjamin's Passagenwerk," in Gary Smith, (ed.), *Benjamin: Philosophy, History, Aesthetics*, (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1989), 210). Further, in *The Arcade Project*, Benjamin writes: "In the course of the nineteenth century, as the bourgeoisie consolidated its positions of power, the concept of progress would increasingly have forfeited the critical functions it originally possessed. (In this process, the doctrine of natural selection had a decisive role to play: it popularized the notion that progress was automatic. The extension of the concept of progress to the whole of human activity was furthered as a result.) ... [N11a,1]," Benjamin, "Konvolut N [On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress]," *The Arcade Project*, 476.

³² Arendt, Hannah, "Introduction," in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 38-41.

³³ Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin, or Toward a Revolutionary Criticism*, 48-49.

³⁴ Tiedemann, "Dialectics at a Standstill," 942.

³⁵ *ibid.*, 59 According to Eagleton, Benjamin's consideration of tradition, of memories that are liberated from the systematic and chronological order of history, finds its parallel in Foucault's archaeology. Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin*.

³⁶ According to Marx, "It is like the beginner (who) always translates back into the mother tongue, but appropriates the spirit of the new language and becomes capable of producing freely within it only by moving about in it without recreating the old" Buck-Morss, *The Dialectic of Seeing*, 122.

³⁷ Habermas, "Modernity's Consciousness of Time," 1-23.

³⁸ *ibid.*, 12-13.

³⁹ *ibid.*, 14.

⁴⁰ "To all past epochs he ascribes a horizon of unfulfilled expectation, and to the future-oriented present he assigns the task of experiencing a corresponding past through remembering, in such a way that we can fulfill its expectations with our weak messianic power. In accordance with this reversal, two ideas can be interwoven: the conviction that the continuity of the context of tradition can be established by barbarism as well as by culture [thesis VIII], and the idea that each respective generation bears the responsibility not only to the fate of future generations but also for the innocently suffered fate of past generations." *ibid.*, 14.

⁴¹ In "Experience and Poverty," Benjamin argues that the development of technology has created the alienated human bodies, a new kind of poverty, that is, a poverty of experience. Looking at the positive side, Benjamin argues that such poverty allows for a new barbarity, in which one can start from a scratch, using as his example Descartes, who started from his statement, or Einstein. In the realm of art, such a start from a scratch occurs in the work of artists who follows mathematical models such as Klee. This poverty experiences also appear in the work of Adolf Loos, who wrote for

modern sensibility, a sensibility underlined by the absence of any illusion, nostalgia for the pasts. Further, Benjamin points to novels of Paul Scheerbart which explore the effect of new inventions on the human body, eventually creating new bodies, who communicated in new, constructed language. Further, these new bodies take as their homes glass houses, such as those realized by Corbusier. Glass, according to Benjamin, eludes aura, since it denies secret and sense of possession. Benjamin draws attention to the bourgeois living room, which has been filled with signature or traces of his individuality, thus the notion of *interieur*. In this space, projection of individuality of the bourgeois, the notion of privacy, other bodies are forced to act, to possess habits in a certain way, leaving out his or her individuality. In contrast to this bourgeois room, the glass room of Corbusier or the steel rooms of Bauhaus has banished the possibilities for such traces to manifest, thus resisting the forcing, the conditioning of the bodies. Such poverty, the naked body, offers the possibility for new auratic experience which avoid nostalgia. ("Experience and Poverty" in Jennings, Michael W., Eiland, Howard, Smith, Gary, et al., *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings vol. 2*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1999), 731-36.

This view also appears in Benjamin's Arcade project:

"It is the peculiarity of technological forms of production (as opposed to art forms) that their progress and their success are proportionate to the transparency of their social content. (Hence glass architecture)" [N4,6] (Benjamin, "Konvolut N [On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress]" in Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 464).

⁴² Habermas, "Modernity's Consciousness of Time," 15.

⁴³ Buck-Morss, Susan, *The Dialectic of Seeing, The Dialectic of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1989), 111-20

⁴⁴ According to Buck-Morss, this understanding leads to the problem of the autonomy of imagination, in which Theodor Adorno detects as approved by Benjamin. However, Benjamin asserts that the desire, the wish image, is a transitory moment in the process of cultural transformation. *Ibid*, 120-21.

⁴⁵ Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, 256-7. Eagleton is very specific in stating that history is a construct of the ruling class, while tradition belongs to the oppressed. (Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin, or Toward a Revolutionary Criticism*, 48).

⁴⁶ Habermas, "Modernity's Consciousness of Time," 12.

⁴⁷ "Experience is indeed a matter of tradition, in collective existence as well as private life. It is less the product of facts firmly anchored in memory than of convergence in memory of accumulated and frequently unconscious data. It is, however, not Bergson's intention to attach any specific historical label to memory. On the contrary, he rejects any historical determination of memory. He thus manages above all to stay clear of that experience from which his own philosophy evolved or, rather, in reaction to which it arose. It was the inhospitable, blinding age of big-scale industrialism. In shutting out this experience the eye perceives an experience of a complementary nature in the form of its spontaneous after image, as it were." Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 157.

⁴⁸ Benjamin, "The Storyteller," in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 84.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 84.

⁵⁰ Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 157.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, 158.

⁵² *ibid.*, 157.

⁵³ Freud's piece of "Beyond the Pleasure Principles" explored the relationship between memory and consciousness. *ibid.*, 160.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*, 160.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, 161.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, 161.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, 162. In Benjamin's interpretations, lyric poetry, such as that of Baudelaire, dwells in this area of the experience of shocks, which makes it relevant to the readers. According to Wolin, Benjamin argued that the indicator of the decline of the traditional fabric is the emergence of the 'shock' that disrupts the familiar pattern of experience of the past, in which tradition is colored by the continuity and repetition. In the other hand, 'shock' characterizes the emergence of the crowd in city life, the emergence of the teeming masses with its growing indifference. In this condition, the structure of experience is transformed, in which, following Freud, stimuli are selected, producing memory traces. Experiences are reduced by and filtered through consciousness, allowing humans to only experience the barest essentials. (Wolin, *Walter Benjamin, An Aesthetic of Redemption*, 227-28).

⁵⁸ According to Eagleton, Benjamin's use of Freud's concept occurs in the theory of remembrance, in the sinking of unregistered stimuli to form memory traces, thus creating a differentiation between experiences that are directly lived (*erlebnis*) from experiences that are inward (*erfahrung*) (Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin, or Toward a Revolutionary Criticism*, 35). Further, according to Wolin, this mechanism of shock prevention destroys remembrance, so that it is

only through the loss of the contents of the stimuli through censorship that experience can be lived (*erlebnis*) (Wolin, *Walter Benjamin, An Aesthetic of Redemption*, 229).

⁵⁹ Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 163. This mechanism of the fragmentation of stimuli is best illustrated in Benjamin's reflections on factory workers and gamblers. Factory workers are subjects who have been turned into automatons, constantly repeating the same chores in the process of production. Because of this situation, the notion of the development of skills through the buildup of experiences assumes a sinister dimension. Similarly, gamblers, always begin anew with a clean slate, for everything relies on chance, denying the notion of the accumulation of memories. *ibid.*, 174-79

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, 163.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, 163.

⁶² Wolin, *Walter Benjamin, An Aesthetic of Redemption*, 229.

⁶³ Benjamin, "The Image of Proust," in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 203-04.

⁶⁴ *ibid.*, 204.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, 211. Further, according to Benjamin, Fernandez has pointed to two themes in Proust's works, that of the eternity and the temporary, in which the eternal theme is considered as time that are bounded to space, a passage of time, reflection of *memoire involontaire*.

⁶⁶ *ibid.*, 204.

⁶⁷ "Awakening is "now of recognizability," a point of rupture, a synthesis between dream consciousness (thesis) and waking consciousness (antithesis). Thus, in Proust, the importance of staking an entire life on life's supremely dialectical point of rupture: awakening. Proust begins with an evocation of the space of someone waking up ([N3a,3].," Benjamin, "Konvolut N [On the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress]" in Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 464

⁶⁸ Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 181.

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, 181. Further, Benjamin points out that, for Baudelaire, time as in calendar were marked by holidays, which allows for such reenactments of the festive. A person who is deprived from these holidays is a person who is deprived from a sense of experience, such as a modern man who is denied from a break from the monotonous acts (Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," 184-5).

⁷⁰ "What Baudelaire meant by correspondences may be described as an experience which seeks to establish itself in crisis-proof form ... (which is) possible in the realm of the ritual. ... The *correspondences* are the data of remembrance—not historical data, but data of prehistory. What makes festive days great and significant is the encounter with an earlier life.," *ibid.*, 182.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, 181.

⁷² "The power of a country road is different when one is walking along it from when one is flying over it by airplane. In the same way, the power of text is different when it is read from when it is copied out. The airplane passenger sees only how the road pushes through the landscape, how it unfolds according to the same laws as the terrain surrounding it. Only he who walks the road on foot learns of the power it commands, and of how, from the very scenery that for the flier is only the unfurled plain, it calls forth distances, belvederes, clearings, prospects at each of its turns like a commander deploying soldiers at a front. Only the copied text thus commands the soul of him who is occupied with it, whereas the mere reader never discovers the aspects of his inner self that are opened by the text, that road that cut through the interior jungle forever closing behind it: because the reader follows the movement of his mind in the free flight of daydreaming, whereas the copier submits it to command. The Chinese practice of copying books was thus an incomparable guarantee of literary culture, and the transcript a key to china's enigma.," Benjamin, "One way street," in Benjamin, *Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 66.

⁷³ Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 233.

⁷⁴ Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 186.

⁷⁵ "Volitional, discursive memory, encouraged by the mechanization of production, reduce the scope for the play of imagination ... defined as an ability to give expression to desires of a special kind, with "something beautiful" thought of as their fulfillment (*ibid.*, 186)."

⁷⁶ "Experience of the aura thus rest on the transposition of a response common in human relationships to the relationships between the inanimate or natural object and man. The person we look at, or who feels he is being looked at, looks at us in return. To perceive the aura of an object we look at means to invest it with the ability to look at us in return. This experience corresponds to the data of the *memoire involontaire*. (These data, incidentally, are unique: they are lost to the memory that seeks to retain them. Thus they lend support to a concept of the aura that comprises the "unique manifestation of a distance." This designation has the advantage of clarifying the ceremonial character of the phenomenon. The essentially distant is the inapproachable: inapproachability is in fact a primary quality of the ceremonial image)." *Ibid.*, 188.

⁷⁷ Thus, in effect, Benjamin posits the authority on the notion of the distance, such as elaborated by Proust in his discussion of monuments which are veiled by its historical distance, or in dreams, which are familiar to us, yet unattainable. Further, it is the idea of remote yet familiar, such as the nymph and satyrs for poet, who already disappear from our world, yet the poet have to be familiar with. Ibid., 188-90.

⁷⁸ Benjamin, "Little History of Photography," in Jennings, Michael W., Eiland, Howard, Smith, Gary et al., *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings vol. 2*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1999), 507-30.

⁷⁹ "A strange weave of space and time: the unique semblance, no matter how close it may be" (ibid., 518). Benjamin, "Little History of Photography,"

⁸⁰ Ibid., 520-27.

⁸¹ Eagleton, *Walter Benjamin, or Toward a Revolutionary Criticism*, 60.

⁸² Ibid., 35-37.

⁸³ Benjamin, "Surrealism, or the last snapshot of European Intelligentsia," in Benjamin, *Reflections*, 182.

⁸⁴ Benjamin, Walter, "Little History of Photography" in Jennings, Michael W., Eiland, Howard, Smith, Gary et al., *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings vol. 2* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1999), 518. In a way, this reflection is similar to his examination of Baudelaire, who saw the crowd through the deserted streets of Paris, whose poems explore traces of what was left on the deserted streets after the crowd had gone.

⁸⁵ "We, ..., believe that the charm they exercise on us is proof that these things, too, contain material of vital importance to us. ... just as Giedion teaches us to read off the basic features of today's architecture in the building erected around 1850, we, in turn, would recognize today's life, today's forms, in the life and in the apparently secondary, lost forms of that epoch. [N1, 11]," Benjamin, "Konvolut N," *The Arcade Project*, 458.

⁸⁶ Benjamin, "Surrealism, or the last snapshot of European Intelligentsia," in Benjamin, *Reflections*, 179.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 189.

⁸⁸ Tiedemann, Rolf, "Dialectics at a Standstill," 1999, 942.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 942-3.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 940.

⁹¹ Benjamin, Walter, "Konvolut N," *The Arcades Project*, 1999, 462.

⁹² Cohen, *Profane Illumination*, 21-22.

⁹³ Tiedemann, Rolf, "Dialectics at a Standstill," 945.

⁹⁴ Habermas, "Modernity's Consciousness of Time." As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Benjamin notes that Baudelaire considered that the frock coat was the proper dress for that time.

⁹⁵ Habermas, "Modernity—an incomplete project."

Chapter 6

Conclusions

This dissertation has discussed the issue of modernity in relationship to context. However, the concept of modernity in architecture should be understood in terms of cultural modernity instead of societal modernity. While the latter refers to the process of modernization that exalted material and economic progress, the former stays true to the spirit of the Enlightenment, focusing on a specific modernist subjectivity that emphasizes one's capability of using reason when making judgments and raising critical questions. Hence, modernity is an attitude based on a break with the immediate past and instead embraces critical, self-reflexivity. A break with the past implies a diversion from uncritical repetitions of conventions of the immediate past. Architecturally, modernity is not a style. It is a way of thinking and formulating design intent. It reconsiders the fundamentals of architecture, including architectural history, in the name of principle rather than in the name of accepted conventions and traditions.

In analyzing the study cases of Geoffrey Bawa, I have examined the ways in which the architect approached each project based on sensibilities to the site and to the programs. Each site and each project posed a different problem. The distinctiveness in Bawa's work lay in his ability to address design challenges through the use of elements derived from the history of architecture in Sri Lanka. His architecture emphasized particular spatial experiences, the use of images, and a sensibility to details, texture, and materials. The main elements used by the architect, the courtyards and the shapes of the roofs, gained importance through the conditions of the spatial experiences precisely because Bawa treated them as typological elements instead of abstractions. This

strategy was in tune with Quatremere de Quincy's formulation of type, which remained on the level of a generative concept instead of a set of rules. Its importance lay in the marked contrast between this strategy and the modernist approach based on rationalization. There, rationalization relied on classification and ordering through the process of reductions based on mathematics and geometry. This approach, in the end, produced a set of codified rules that allowed for mechanical reproductions, albeit the possibilities to achieve variation, a trait that articulated the link between classical architecture and the modernist approach in the Twentieth Century. However, the abstraction in Bawa's architecture appeared not so much through a process that was based on abstract means such as geometry and proportion, but through labor at articulating the essence as a mode of abstraction of history and locality. This idea of the essence—created by the interplay between the spatial and formal organization of his plans, sections, elevations, and sensibility to scale, to the surfaces and textures of materials, and to the details of the building, vegetation, and the site—created a vessel for a direct experience that tapped into the observer's memory. Using this approach, Bawa managed to create, in effect, synchronic experiences through the technique of montage, suspending the sense of the progress of time. However, the notion of memory in this line of thought is a constructed, cultural memory that is a particular trait of modernity.

The case of Bawa, as reflected in the other cases in this dissertation, exemplified an approach to architecture that alluded to the importance of the emotional aspects through direct experience as opposed to the use of a set of codified rules, that is, the use of a language. Furthermore, the case also articulated the relationship to context through the use of elements derived from the locality that generated such perceptual and emotional experiences. As a result of this approach, users become engaged with

context due to the planimetric and sectional arrangements, the forms of the buildings, the ornamental and decorative elements, and the choice of building materials and techniques. Such engagement seems to be more impelled by the cultural and historical aspects of context rather than by the objective elements. As evidenced in the former, these architects seemed to have reacted to modernist abstractionism, which was based on rationalization of the context. Underlying this difference was two aspects of the abstraction of history, that is, rational abstraction, which led to a codified language, and romantic abstraction, which alluded to a set of codified results. In line with the argument in this dissertation, it seems that the difference was between the adjustment of a formal language that carried with it cultural significance, whether local or universal, versus the play of essence that was associated with experience. In addition, by avoiding the sense of a language that implied universality and mechanical reproduction, these cases articulated the distinctiveness that was appropriate to place.

In the case of Bawa and the other architects of the three comparative studies discussed in Chapters 2, 3, and 4, this dissertation has attempted to demonstrate the centrality of the active subject within a built environment, one who engages in negotiation and dialogue with his surroundings both in terms of the physical environment and socio-cultural milieus. These architects collected and borrowed from the past, but they did so by establishing a new principle that aimed for a re-synthesis to achieve integration. Hence, they explored and transformed traditions while turning to elements from seemingly unrelated cultures from different time periods. However, they were able to merge these elements so that their creations appeared to be unified entities. Through analyses of their work, I have endeavored to show that these architects were not simply reproducing the pattern afforded by the situations they were in, but instead, they were asserting their role as active subjects y insinuating their own readings into their

architecture. I have demonstrated that in the case of Bawa, just as in the other cases, the architects adopted an eclectic approach. This modernist eclecticism reflected each personal recollection of influences derived from both the immediate surroundings and more distance sources, and in effect, articulated the notion of the authentic subject that modernity engendered. The authenticity of the design was related to the authenticity of the subject as reflected by an autobiographical design strategy rather than by regional authenticity, understood as an organic unity among place, people, and cultural artifacts implied in the theories of regionalism. Thus, context is understood as an environment, or materials that “feed” the design process. In this way, the attitude of modernity relates to a specific modernist subject that constructs identity with regard to context. Following this line of thought, authenticity is understood as an act that establishes new rules; hence, it is axiomatic in contrast to the applications of rules and principles and therefore methodical.

The axiomatic stance also allowed these architects to problematize elements derived from the past and from tradition. Because of this position, they distinguished their work from that which adopts design strategies that aim for the re-creation of architecture from the past, including traditional architecture and colonial architecture. Hence, Bawa explored the possibility of designing buildings with courtyards and big roofs, which included ways of approaching the construction, the shapes, and the proportions of courtyards, and the shape and the proportions of roofs. Similarly, the three cases in Chapter 4 also illustrate the exploration and the transformation of elements derived from local history and traditions. The exploration of local elements also includes experimentation with common local construction techniques and available building materials. In the case of Bawa, instead of using the wall structure found in colonial buildings, he turned to and experimented with concrete frame and timber frame

structures. However, the appearance of his buildings still maintains the primacy of the wall. Burgess and Mangunwijaya introduced new techniques that incorporated local materials. However, the work of the Rural Studio exemplified a more discrete approach to construction because of the uniqueness of the materials that they used. That is, although a repetition of the approach Bawa used to construct his buildings is possible, each work of the Rural Studio tends to be a singular case in terms of construction.

Chapter 4 discusses Stanford Anderson's view of the generative role of tradition, which acknowledges that both a common ground could emerge and understanding could prevail. However, as this dissertation has shown, tradition has been problematized instead of adhered to. Following this line of thought, Chapter 3 argues that the architecture of Geoffrey Bawa celebrates the rich history of the island by highlighting the cultural traits of the island as the meeting point of the Tamils, the Sinhalese, the Arabs, and the Europeans. He created an inclusive set of architectural expressions of Sri Lanka, defying the official narrative of the island nation, which tended to veer toward the glorification of the concept of the ethnic nationalism of the Sinhalese. The analysis provides ample evidence that Bawa's architecture reflects the notion of "Sri Lanka-ness," the heterogeneity of Sri Lanka, which is indeed a country that has been home to a large number of past and present ethnic groups. Thus, his architecture redeems the past. Examples discussed in Chapter 4 also demonstrate a similar attitude rejecting major historical constructs and instead giving voice to alternative narratives. In these cases, the classification and the ordering of architectural elements derived from the past and the present exemplify a different trait from that which employed a narrative associating a style with a particular historical time or a particular group of people. Instead, they are an eclectic juxtaposition of elements from different times and places. Following this line of argument, I have attempted to demonstrate the way in which Bawa's architecture

provides a sense of suspended time. From one perspective, Bawa's architecture was a cautious critique of the notion of "progress" implied in the ideology of modernization that advocated a desire to universalize and homogenize the world. Thus, his architecture refrains from being a mere reflection of the industrial world with its abstract features and representations of technical progress. Instead, it attempts to articulate and communicate the current milieu of contemporary Sri Lanka. Allusions to the past are combined with the disciplines of program and functionality, site challenges, and contemporary construction. This point seems to be the dominant quality that underlies the architecture of Geoffrey Bawa and constitute its unique essence.

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